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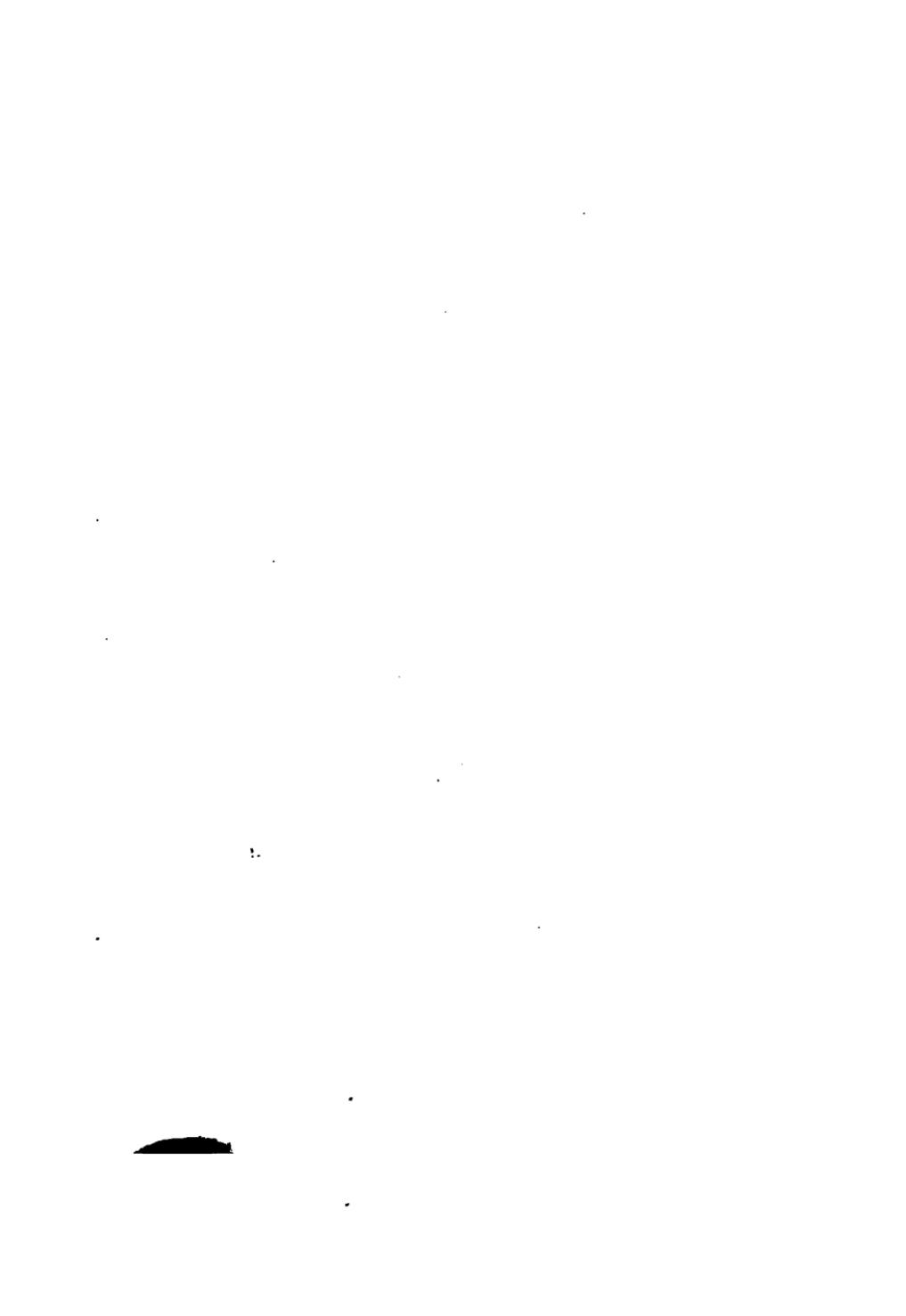
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THE

PARISH ORPHAN;

AND

A SKETCH OF THE VILLAGE

IN THE LAST CENTURY.

BY

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BOSTON:

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THE reader should be informed, that the second portion of this little book was published thirteen years ago. It was then received with great favor by persons whose good opinion is very precious to the author, but like other things of trifling importance it passed out of sight, and is now recalled only as connected with the Parish Orphan.

WNR 19 FEB 35



## FLORENCE, THE PARISH ORPHAN.

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### CHAPTER I.

‘Then Nature said, “ A lovelier flower  
On earth was never sown ;  
This child I to myself will take ;  
She shall be mine, and I will make  
A lady of my own.”’

THE old meeting-houses and school-houses of New England, with no beauty of architecture, and no durability of structure, possess yet a moral interest in the eyes of the descendants of the Puritan fathers. They are eloquent with the two great ideas, that prevailed in the early Commonwealth,—religion and education. The school-houses of the New England villages bore, at the end of the last century, a striking resemblance to the meeting-houses, inferior only in proportion to the importance they held in the

estimation of our ancestors. Both were plain unpainted barn-like structures, upon whose exterior the changes of the seasons, and in some places the salt spray of the ocean, had woven a rich embroidery of brown and leaf-like moss, often giving them the venerable appearance of dark and mouldering stone. The school-house was usually a one-story, square wooden structure, standing a little aside from the road, but under the wing of the meeting-house. The turf in front, kept short and smooth by the sports of the village children, greatly aided by the flocks of village geese, which were usually turned out to get their precarious living upon the turf of the roadside, before the iron railroad had ploughed it up, and upon the green knolls which elevated the meeting-house and the school-house above the village inn and the village pound. Harmless and innocent commoners! who, that loves rural sights and sounds, can forget the repose of a summer's afternoon, when the drowsy school is quiet from the lassitude of heat, and the bright sun checkers the turf beneath the flickering branches of the elms, and the stillness is suddenly broken by the prolonged and joyous quack of a flock of these pure white and silvery-gray feathered birds, as they rise from



their repose and march slowly to the roadside pond.

The school-house of our village stood upon the meeting-house hill, to which a few scattered elms lent a partial but most welcome shade. It was a lowly, humble building, wearing, both within and without, the brown hue of unpainted boards. The desks and benches within, divided by an alley running up the middle, were polished bright with wear, and variegated with the sculptured names and other grotesque characters, the marks of the successive penknives of the youthful occupants. Children and young people of both sexes attended the village grammar-school, which was often placed under the care of young men of very superior character and attainments. In the simple and frugal early times of New England, it was no disgrace to the very first in the land to pay their college expenses by teaching a village school, and the long winter vacation furnished them with funds to meet the expenses of the remainder of the year. Among such are the illustrious names of Fisher Ames, Daniel Webster, and a host of others. Indeed, the difficulty would be in New England to find a great man who had not been, at some short period of his life, a teacher of the village school.

Our school-house, as I have said, was divided in the centre by an alley through the benches, which were in ascending succession, so that the master's desk, placed in the right hand corner, could overlook the whole. An immense open fireplace faced the benches, which rose in such an angle, that the most remote could see and feel the genial heat of a roaring fire, that was kept perpetually supplied with large logs of hickory wood. There was then no necessity for economy in heating ; no need to spare the noble trees. The only trouble was to bring in the logs, and this the boys were emulous of doing, so that an immense fire might always in winter fill the ample chimney. At the time we write of, the plan of scientific ventilation of school-houses had never entered the heads of the school committees, or the guardians of the health of children. The great concern was to get as much learning in as little time, and with as small expense, as possible. But the roaring fire in the immense fireplace carried up through the chimney a stream of air that would have turned a small windmill ; and when the heat became insupportable, the keen and pure wintry air was freely admitted through the windows to help the current.

It was now winter time, and there was in the school nearly a hundred young people of both sexes, from eight years old to twenty. The young man who now taught was a senior from Cambridge college; the son of a merchant in Boston, who was emulous, but without pecuniary necessity, of proving his manhood by teaching a village school. He was slender, fair, and delicate in his appearance, with refined tastes and manners; equitable, but strict in his government of the school, and a great favorite. He was exquisitely neat, indeed fastidious in his dress and habits. His predecessor in the school had been a country fellow not over-refined in his habits, but an excellent teacher. Under his administration the pupils had acquired the negligent habit of bringing various provisions to the school-house; such as apples, potatoes, and even sausages, and roasting them at the fire during the recess between the morning and evening school, filling the room with an effluvia of the kitchen, very offensive to the new master. He endured it for a few days, and then published an order, forbidding any provision whatever being placed at the fire, either morning, noon, or evening. This may seem a trifle, but it may be recollected that an officer of Frederic

the Great lost his life because he kept his lamp burning, in order to seal a letter to his wife, an instant after the permitted time.

The new order of the master was infringed by a little girl, whose history is so interesting, that we will detain the reader to relate it. The war of the Revolution had closed only a few years before the date of the events of our story. The generous French allies who came to our aid in that struggle, had among them many officers who brought their wives to the country, and these devoted women usually followed the fortunes of the army, and bore all the hardships of the camp with their husbands. A subaltern officer, whose wife had left her native country from love to her husband, was wounded and expired on the field of battle. His wife, scarcely twenty years old, supported his dying head upon her lap in the agony of the last hour, embittered to him by the situation in which he left her. He had strength to whisper as she bent over him, 'Go immediately to Boston, my beloved wife, and appeal to Lafayette; entreat him to provide a way for your return to France. My family will cherish and love you for my sake and your own. O do not stay a day in America; you may find kind and good people

here, but your ignorance of the language will render your situation doubly embarrassing. Promise me!' The promise was scarcely given, when the young soldier expired, and she fainted as she held the corpse in her arms.

She was taken from the blood-stained field, and placed in a wagon with wounded soldiers, and brought with humanity as far as the little inn of our village, being too ill to proceed to Boston. There she gave birth to a little girl, and almost without returning consciousness she expired. But just before breathing her last, she opened her eyes upon her little daughter, and taking a crucifix from her neck she made an effort to suspend it around the neck of the infant. It fell into the hands of the nurse, and was preserved for the child, although it indicated that the mother was a Catholic. This circumstance created some embarrassment at the funeral of the mother, whose grave was made in a remote corner of our village burial-ground, but shaded by a pear-tree, that hung from a neighboring garden over the wall. It was a touching incident that her grave was made under the shadow of the tree of her native clime. The venerable and liberal pastor, to meet the circumstance of her being a Catholic, read over her

grave the burial service of the church of England. And for many years the solemn and affecting burial, so new in its ceremony, and so touching in its circumstances, was not forgotten in our village.

It was a question whispered from ear to ear, in the little procession, on its passage from the inn door to the gate of the grave-yard, 'What was to become of the infant?' It is a fact that no one in our village felt rich enough to adopt the little orphan. It was during the hottest strife of the war, and heads of families knew not where to turn to meet the expenses of living, and the demands made by the country. The farmers had more olive branches growing around their tables, than sheaves of corn in their fields; and although there was many a mother who yearned to take the little French baby to her breast, prudence, and her husband's diminished resources forbade, and it became the charge of the parish.

It was the orphan of the parish, and was offered to the cheapest bidder, to nurse and bring up, till it was old enough to bind out as a farm servant. Such was the custom of our ancestors, and it was esteemed humane! A poor woman, who lived a short distance within the forest,

offered for the lowest price ; and the poor babe, hastily clad in some cast-off clothes of the inn-keeper's wife's last infant, and wrapped in an old blanket, was taken in the dusk of the evening in the poor woman's arms to her cottage. The appearance of the cottage was desolate in the extreme. It had only two small rooms, both ill sheltered, or defended from the cold, the wind, and the rain. It stood half a mile within the forest, with a little spot for cabbages cleared around it. The circumstance that induced the overseers to give this the preference, was, that Mrs. Griffiths had a cow who picked up her precarious living in the greeny spots around, and where the fresh sweet grass grew in nooks of beauty, and under the shadows of rocks ; and this cow, after giving Mrs. Griffiths a few pounds of butter a week, which she exchanged with her neighbors for necessaries, became the foster-nurse of the little orphan.

When the poor woman reached her cottage, the sun had set, and it was quite dark in the wood. She laid her burthen on the bed, while she proceeded to open the embers on the hearth, and warm some food for her new charge. Her reflections were not cheerful ; she thought within herself, 'What am I to do with this poor help-

less baby? I, a lone woman? How shall I manage when I must be away? and then to be kept awake all night with the poor child crying for its mother. Ah me!' and she began to reckon upon her fingers what the four shillings a week, which she was to receive, would come to in a year, before she could be reconciled to the presence of the poor orphan. It was in English currency, and ten pounds was no small sum. She went nearer, to uncover her little charge, and as she did so it smiled with an innocent pleading expression, and its little tender soft hand clasped her brown bony fingers, and the unconscious babe knew not yet that its dark smoky home was not a palace, and its guardian not the tender mother that bore it.

Never child throve as did this one. There was some blessed virtue in that milky mother, the cow. The infant grew not only large, fair, beautiful and bright, but it was blessed with the serenest of tempers. It slept the sweet and serene sleep of healthful infancy, and was never known to disturb the long night of its guardian. It would lie for whole hours in the wooden box which was converted into its cradle, and while the old woman pursued her work, the bright eyes would follow her, or it would amuse itself with won-

dering gaze at the rays of the sun, as they played upon the smoky rafters of the cottage. It thrrove upon neglect ; and smiled, and looked with innocent joy upon the homely scene of destitution around. How many a childless mother would have blessed God for such a gift, and would have lavished upon it all the luxuries which this little motherless child of poverty never missed or needed. It grew in beauty. The little red baize gown which contrasted so picturesquely with its milk-white neck and arms, seemed a drapery adjusted by a painter ; and the little polished ivory feet upon the brown earthen floor of the hut, shone like snow-drops bursting from the mould of the garden. When the little child could creep and throw its limbs into every charming attitude of careless grace, as the old woman sat at her spinning-wheel, and followed it with her eyes, its heavenly beauty in this homely cottage seemed as much out of place as did the picture of the Madonna and child, by Correggio, when it served for the shutter of the stable window of an inn.

The babe was christened, and as *Florence* was marked upon the linen of its mother, it received that name, soon converted into *Flory*, by the tenderness of every one who looked upon the

little orphan. When she was two years old and upwards, Mrs. Griffiths, or Goody, as she was called in our village, took her with her when she went to sell her butter and eggs, her summer berries and her winter-spun yarn, and many were the additions to her comfort, and the pieces of money thrust into her hand, on account of the sweet face of the little orphan. And as she grew up, no exposure, neither sun, nor wind, nor cold; no scanty food or clothing seemed to tarnish the beauty of the little girl. The transparency of her complexion, and the delicate rose upon her cheek, the light brown hair curling around the clear open brow, and the deep blue of her eye, like the unsearchable depths of the sea, expanded unseen in the desert, and under the shadow of the ancient trees. This sterile and barren pasture, was to her like brooks of running water, and gales from paradise. There she grew in beauty, and performed all homely domestic duties for her ancient guardian, repaying her fourfold for the care of her infancy. It was Flory who brought home and milked the cow. Flory gathered the wood in the forest for the fire; swept the earthen floor; fed the fowls, and sought for their eggs in the low shrubs, and in the clefts of the rocks. Flory's little hands

even turned up the soil with the wooden hoe, and planted the potatoes, and gathered them in when ripe. The berries that brought four coppers a quart at the minister's door, were of Flory's gathering ; and a kind word and some little present was often added to the coppers, when she made her humble curtsy to the minister's lady. She grew and blossomed as the flowers blossom, in unseen fragrance, under God's blessed heaven, and no thought of deprivation nor of discontent had ever visited her innocent breast.

'Heaven lay about her in her infancy,  
No shadow of the prison-house had ever closed  
Upon the growing girl.'

## CHAPTER II.

FLORENCE was now nine years old, and the overseers of the poor began to look about them for some farmer's wife to whom they could bind or indenture the little girl, till her eighteenth year; for that was the custom with what were called *parish orphans*. The delicate creature would henceforth be a farm servant of all work. Hard would be the drudgery that she must perform, and hard the words, and coarse the manners she must meet; and if her mistress were not humane, perhaps hard blows would also be the portion of the orphan. But Mrs. Griffiths, beside having found awakened in her poor withered heart, all the love that had slumbered there through sixty years of poverty and hardship, had learned the value of the poor girl's services, and the comfort of a loving and willing nature, to cheer her wintry day of life, and to pour into her cup the oil of youthful gladness; and she besought the overseers to allow Florence to stay with her. After considering the services that poor Flory was capable of rendering, they wrung

from the old woman the four shillings they had paid since her infancy, and made it also a condition of the bargain, that she should attend the grammar-school in the afternoon in the summer, and both morning and afternoon in the winter.

Florence had hitherto gone very irregularly to the dame's school ; it was a great step in her life when she was admitted to the grammar-school, and she soon began to attract the attention of every one. Her progress also was rapid. All her faculties having been in full exercise during the whole of her previous life, when her mind was directed to the intellectual effort of acquiring book knowledge, she was found quick and intelligent beyond her years. We do not mean that Flory was a genius, but she possessed one faculty in a remarkable degree. A sense of fitness and propriety. It might be called taste, and it was wonderful how the characteristic of her native land appeared in the little back-woods girl of New England. Every thing that her hand touched acquired a grace from it. Her little red cloak, in winter, and the hood that came round her face, fell, as it were, by accident, into the graceful folds that were the most becoming to her fair round cheek, and to laughing eyes of the deepest blue.

At the time when our story begins, Flory was about thirteen years old. She had become a general favorite in the school with the girls, because she was always good tempered ; with the boys, for her beauty and gentleness. The master liked her for her obedience and general attention to order, and the minister, who came often to the school, discerned in her a gentle, docile, and humble disposition, respectfully attentive to all his instructions. Various tokens of good-will were shown to the parish orphan. Frequently she found in her desk, apples, chestnuts, and other dainties, conveyed by some fairy hand, to help out the scanty fare of her home. As Flory could thank no one, she felt a general complacency and gratitude, that made her even more attractive and charming.

But we must leave her for a short time, to introduce another, who will claim a large portion of our attention in the continuance of our story.

Ralph Leonard, one of the boys of our school, was also, like Florence, an orphan, but not a dependent or unportioned orphan ; he had, on the contrary, the prospect of inheriting one of the best farms in the village. By the sudden death in his infancy of both his parents, he was left to the care of a maiden aunt, the sister of his father,

and joint owner of the farm. She was expected to keep it in cultivation till her nephew was of age, when he would become proprietor of his father's share, and was supposed to be the heir of his aunt. There was scarcely a prospect of her marrying in the meantime, for she was already past the age of youthful attachments, and she was thought to love power too well to be willing to part with any portion she possessed, much less to surrender herself to the control of another.

Ralph would have been a noble boy, had he been rightly educated ; but Miss Molly Leonard, as she was called, had some very peculiar ideas upon the subject of her nephew's education. She believed in total depravity, and yet, from indolence and the love of her own ease, she acted upon the principle of universal goodness in the soul. She professed to let Ralph govern himself by his own reason, and chose to preserve her authority, by indulgence, acting upon the reasoning head and the grateful heart of a child. The notion of setting up the reason to govern a child, from the cradle upwards, is a fallacy which should have been long since buried. 'Prompt, implicit, unreasoning, almost unconscious obedience, is the first thing to be taught a child ; and he can have no peace to his soul without it.'

Those persons who insist upon leaving a poor child to govern himself by affection and reason, without giving him the aid and protection from his passions, derived from the fear of offending, and the fear of punishment, are often the surest enemies of the objects of their fondest love; and if the system is adopted from indolence, from aversion to the trouble and pain of punishing a child for disobedience, how much deeper is the guilt. Miss Leonard professed to love her nephew, but it could not be called a wholly unselfish love; for to spare herself the pain of thwarting his inclinations, she allowed him to do mischief; and to spare herself the trouble of inflicting punishment, she allowed him in bursts of uncontrolled passion, from the effects of which she could not always herself escape.

To mention an instance which will place his passion and her weakness in a strong light. Ralph was fond of animals, and often surrounded himself with favorite dogs that were a great annoyance to his aunt, and especially destructive to her poultry, for Ralph enjoyed the amusement of setting the dogs to hunt the young chickens, and no entreaties of his aunt could prevail upon him to desist, accustomed as he was to follow his own pleasures, regardless of her wishes, and

deaf to her commands. The poultry-yard had been thinned by the dog, to half its numbers, when his aunt adopted the rather extreme measure, of ordering the farm servant to tie up the dog and shoot him. When Ralph came home from school, and saw his dog lying dead, he turned pale with rage ; and the agony of his sorrow, and his thirst for revenge, were too strong for that boasted reason which his aunt expected to govern a boy of fifteen. The gun was still there, and loaded, for the man had re-loaded it, and turning the muzzle towards a favorite calf of his aunt's, that stood meekly by its mother, he instantly discharged it, and shot the poor calf through the head. His aunt could not now punish him, for his physical strength far exceeded hers ; and as she had allowed his former bursts of passion to pass unpunished, from his infancy upwards, representing to him the wickedness of such passion had no more effect than drops of water upon the polished granite. He answered, when reproached for his wickedness, ‘ That she had ordered his dog to be shot, and that he had a right to kill her calf.’ It is too true, that his aunt did not always present to him an example of meekness and gentleness, and few can tell how destructive of all respect is the exhibition

of anger and peevishness in those to whom a child looks up for guidance and example.

Perhaps the infirmities of his aunt's temper and the irritation it produced in Ralph, was the reason that he appeared and behaved well every where except at home. He was, in fact, a general favorite in the village—a noble, generous, and intrepid boy. His courage and disregard of danger were sometimes carried to an extreme forgetfulness of self. One instance only will be mentioned.

Our village bordered on the ocean. About a mile from the centre, where were the meeting and school-houses, was an extent of sea-beach of beautiful smooth sand, which, at low water, afforded a favorite promenade and play-place for the children. This was shut in by two headlands. The one on the right rising more than a hundred feet sheer and perpendicular from the water. At the foot of this, however, below high-water mark, were piled up huge and irregular rocks, upon which the waves broke with overpowering terror and majesty. On the left of the little bay, the bluff was not more than thirty feet, and wholly free from rocks at its base; the vast ocean washing against it with a soothing, silvery sound, and a transparency

through which the eye penetrated with delight to the marbled and pebbly floor. Just under this promontory was a little sheltered cove, where the fishermen of our village stowed their boats. The top of this bluff was covered with turf, and a favorite place for the school children to hang their tiny fishing-hooks, to catch such small fry as ventured too near at high-water mark.

A little boy of four or five years old had one day leaned too far over his line, lost his balance, and plunged beneath the waves; it was high water, and he was borne far out by the receding wave. The boys lingering near screamed out for Ralph, and instantly, without waiting to throw off his clothes, he plunged in, and brought the little fellow safe to land. No one expressed any surprise, as it was what was expected of Ralph; intrepidity and generous forgetfulness of self were a part of his character. Oh! could his aunt have looked forward and seen how such a noble nature was at length overthrown, and condemned to feel the agonies of remorse for uncontrolled passion, she would have chosen rather to have seen him dead in his cradle, than to have suffered his violence of temper to go unpunished, for 'wrath is cruel;' 'and he that

ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city.'

From the day that Florence came to the school, Ralph, from an instinct of generosity, attached himself to the little girl who was scorned at first as the *parish orphan*. Her clothing was indeed very scanty; she was too poor to wear shoes and stockings; Ralph protected the little bare feet from the sneers of the boys, declaring that it would be a shame to hide them; and had he been a sculptor, he would have had reason on his side; but at the same time he saved all his pocket-money, and a new pair of shoes and stockings were one evening deposited within the unfastened window of Goody Griffiths' cottage. Ralph had many ways of showing his devotion to poor Florence. It was the business of the girls by turns to sweep the school-house, and in the winter it was the duty of the boys to make the fires. When Flory's turn came round, the school-room was swept by invisible hands long before the sun rose; and when Flory, just as the glorious orb appeared above the horizon, came from the path that led into the forest, all armed with broom and duster, behold, the school-house was open,

and swept and garnished ; if in summer, with green branches and flowers ; if in the winter, she was greeted with a roaring fire.

But services at the cottage were not wanting. In the winter, a path was made through the snow quite up to the Goody's door ; and the waste wood in the forest, which served for their fuel, collected and piled close to the cottage. The poor old woman used often to say, 'What a good boy Ralph is ; he thinks of my rheumatism and remembers that I am old, and does all that he can to help me ; and yet they say, Flory, that he has a masterful temper.' 'That is because his aunt will not let him have his own way. I am sure he is gentle and kind to us — to you, grandmother.' 'Have his own way !' answered the Goody, 'and why should he ? Is he not a child yet ? Did I ever let you have your own way, Flory ?' Florence thought she had always had her way. But in such natures as hers obedience is blissful acquiescence, and the freedom of the will is lost in love.

Thus these two children grew up in unconscious blessedness. Nature's sweet instincts drew them together ; but no thought of passion sullied the purity of their intercourse. It is true

the benefits received were all on one side, but no feeling of pride or of unwilling obligation checked the flow of gratitude that was leading Florence to a warmer feeling. And yet the obligation was not *all* on one side. Ralph became gentle, humane, humble, in the presence of Flory; and had there been no counteracting influence at home, he would have lost by degrees the passionateness of his nature, and it would have been moulded into hers. A conversation that passed between them in the summer, previous to the opening of our story, will serve to illustrate their feelings towards each other.

Ralph had brought, early in the spring, for Florence, a great number of the flowers of the woods, and planted them around and under the windows of the cottage, and they, 'touched by her fairer tendance gladlier grew.' It was now midsummer: Mrs. Griffiths had not returned from the neighboring town, where she had gone to sell her berries and other things, and the two children were standing, just at the close of day, looking at the flowers. The setting sun threw its last rays upon the upper branches of the trees, while through an opening glade of emerald green, they saw above the sapphire of the sky. As Florence stooped over her flowers, the light

touched her golden brown curls with a glory, such as the old painters gave to their saints and madonnas. Ralph seemed to feel the influence of the hour, and to be entranced with an admiration of which Florence was wholly unconscious. 'Why,' said he, at length, 'why do we, Flory, love each other better than all the other boys and girls that we know?' 'Because—because,' said Flory, at loss for an answer—'because we are both orphans, I suppose. We have never had a mother, Ralph, to love.' 'But if I had a mother, I should not love her as well as I do you; and you—you, Flory—could you love a mother as well as you do me?' Florence was silent, and looked down upon her flowers. She was not prepared to say that Ralph would have stood in her affections above the cherished mother of her imagination. There is an instinctive delicacy in woman. Florence, though perfectly unconscious of wrong, shrank from the avowal of love to Ralph. She said, therefore, seeing the dark cloud gathering over the boy's face, 'I do *like* you, Ralph, because you have been so kind to grandmother, and to me,' she timidly added, 'but she says it would be wrong to like you better than I do her.' 'Better than you do her! What! that old woman who has

made you work so hard, and go without shoes, and do all her drudgery! No, no, Flory, it would be wicked to love her; and you don't—and you shan't love her! but you must—and you do love me! or—or I'll kill myself!' Poor Florence was frightened at his violence, but the termination of Ralph's speech struck her as so ludicrously beyond the occasion, that she burst into a loud laugh. Beside, she was one of those gentle natures who suffer all things, and she never dreamed that the guardian of her infancy had imposed upon her labors too hard for her strength; for to her willing mind they were light, and to her buoyant disposition almost play.

Flory's light laugh increased the ill temper of Ralph, and he sat down and covered his face with his hand, and she soon saw that tears were trickling through his brown, sunburnt fingers. Florence went and stood timidly by him, and gently removing his hand from his face, said, 'I do, Ralph, I do *like* you a great deal better than I do grandmother, because you always look at me with a pleasanter face, and your eyes are a great deal brighter.' This innocent flattery, although no great compliment, appeased Ralph, and he went home questioning himself whether his love

for Florence had any thing to do with her eyes. 'Were they bright?' he asked himself. He thought they were not so bright as many he had seen; but there was something in their deep blue, when she looked kindly at him, that he felt through every fibre of his frame. They pierced through to his heart with something like a sharp pain, and yet a pain so delicious that he would not have parted with it for all the world beside.

## CHAPTER III.

We have brought events now to the incidents of our true story. It was one of the coldest days of February, that sullen month

‘When ways grow foul, and blood gets cold.’

With the help of all the logs the boys could heap upon the fire of the great chimney, they had not yet started the faery wreaths and the fantastic gambols of the frost from the school-room windows. Flory’s grandmother had forbidden her to come home in the recess, and had given her some apples and bread for her dinner. When the school was dismissed and she took out her apples for her frugal meal, she found they were frozen hard. She placed them before the hot embers, and thought all traces of them would be removed before the return of the master. But alas, the apples were frozen to the core, and the scorching of the outside filled the room with the dreaded effluvia, and before Florence could draw them from the ashes she saw the master entering, and had but just time to fly to her seat

on the lowest form, that nearest the master, and hide her scorched and blushing face by the lid of her desk.

The school-room filled rapidly, and there was soon a complete silence, awful to poor Florence, for all motion of feet and scratching of pens had ceased, as the master looked at the apples and assumed one of his darkest frowns. He then rose and said he perceived that his recent strict rule had been broken ; he could not pretend to know who was the culprit, but he hoped whoever it might be, that he would exonerate all others by coming to receive his punishment, which would be six strokes of the ferule on the palm of the hand.

The school was silent as the grave. Florence was nailed by shame and diffidence to her seat. She was not so much afraid of the pain as of the mortification of standing up to be punished before the whole school.

The silence continued about half a minute, when a tall, gentlemanly boy walked slowly down from the upper form, and held out his hand to the master. To the electrical surprise of the whole school, for all knew whose were the apples, the punishment was administered, and the boy bowed and walked calmly back, without

glancing to the right or the left, to his seat. Flory could endure no longer ; she rose from her seat, and burst into an agony of tears. The young master perceived in an instant the true culprit. He turned kindly to the weeping child and said, that as George Lovell had been so generous as to receive the punishment due to another, he would not pain his noble disinterestedness by inflicting it upon her, who had transgressed the rule.

Young people are enchanted with a generous act, and Lovell was applauded really beyond his deserts ; for a few strokes of a ferule are really no severe punishment, where, as in this case, there is no disgrace attending it. The girls, especially, overwhelmed him with their admiring glances, when he afterwards came down with his class to recite. All were pleased except Ralph ; but he sat in his seat, filled with anger and envy at the happy inspiration of the thought, and wrung with jealousy that another should have dared to interpose, and take from him that which of right belonged to himself, — to defend Flory against every thing. He neglected his lesson, and when called to recite he was totally incapable of any mental effort. The master looked anxiously at his troubled countenance,

and determined to keep him in mind, lest some accident or quarrel should ensue.

Florence had remained quiet since this exciting scene. In her eyes, for all things are important to school children, it placed her under an immense obligation to the generous boy, who had taken upon himself her punishment; but she could not frame words to thank him without the tears overpowering them; she remained, therefore, silent and quiet, till the school-room was quite empty, and then went sorrowfully home.

Lovell also was walking slowly homeward. His father was the only lawyer we had in our village; his house stood half a mile from its centre, aside in rather a lonely field. George was not thinking of the occurrence at the school, for he was a generous boy, and to a generous act like that, to shield a little girl from punishment, was a thing so much of course, that he did not think of being thanked or envied for it. He did not prefer Florence at this time to any of the other girls. He knew that she was the youngest and much the prettiest, although her dress was of the coarsest materials. He knew also that she was an orphan, a parish child, and had heard that something mysterious attached to her birth.

This last impression had arisen from the crucifix and the ceremony at her mother's funeral ; as slight peculiarities in a small village are magnified into marvels. He had just turned into the field that led to his father's door, when he received so violent a blow upon the side of his head as to throw his hat off, and nearly to prostrate him in the snow. As he rose, the blow was instantly repeated. 'Take that, and that !' cried Ralph, 'and never dare again to touch Flory Griffiths, or to think of her ; and if she roasts any more apples, dare if you will to hold out your hand to the master, and I will send you to the —— ;' for poor Ralph, in the heat of his violent bursts of passion, sometimes made use of improper language. Lovell had by this time recovered himself, and the first thing he did was to burst into a loud laugh. 'Why, Ralph,' he cried, 'are you mad ? What is Flory to me, or to you, but a little poor child ; and if I don't choose to see her feruled, what is that to you ? Go home, or I'll give you a thrashing.' 'Promise me,' said Ralph, 'that you'll never think of her again.' 'What do I care for the child,' said Lovell, 'but I'll think of her as much as I please.' 'Then I'll fight you,' said Ralph, and the two boys began in earnest ; both rolled over

in the snow, sometimes one, sometimes the other, gaining an advantage, till Mr. Lovell, passing in a sleigh, as he came home late from his office, separated the combatants, and took his son with him.

Ralph appeared at school the next day with a black eye, and the two boys were henceforth enemies, mortal foes, and the school was divided into Lovellites and Leonardists, as the other children adhered to the one or the other. Very few of their partisans knew the occasion of the quarrel, or the merits of the cause on either side; but the timid adhered to Ralph for the same reason that the Americans did to General Jackson, because he was a good fighter; and the steady chivalrous boys turned to Lovell, because he had espoused the cause of the weak; and the girls all voted for him by acclamation.

The innocent cause of all this party spirit, went unnoticed and unconsciously on her quiet way. She came regularly to school, was simple and diligent in all her duties. She was now fourteen years old, and had grown both tall and lovely. The expressive blue of her eye had deepened, and the full rose of childhood upon

her cheek had paled to the pearly rose-tint of  
the evening sky,

‘Like the swell of some sweet tune,  
May glides onward into June.  
Childhood is the bough, where slumbered  
Buds and blossoms many numbered.’

• • • •

Though Florence was the poor parish orphan,  
yet she was endowed with that peculiar charm,  
that seal of God upon her brow, that won her an  
instant pathway to every heart. She carried a  
benediction in her lovely innocent face.

‘On her lips the smile of truth,  
And in her heart the dew of youth.  
Oh that smile like sunlight darts  
Into many a sunless heart,  
For a smile of God thou art.’

But poetry injures by trying to idealize such natures. They are beautiful by being simply what they are ; what God has made them, as he has made the rose and the lily to grow and bloom under the sweet influences of his sunshine, his breeze, his dew and rain : they expand and exhale their fragrance upon the air of the desert, as sweetly as in the luxurious inclosure of the garden, and fulfil the perfect object

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of existence, where there is no eye to admire, and no sense to be ravished with their beauty. So Florence was perfect in her loneliness as in her loveliness, and felt no need of admiring eyes. She had never looked in a mirror, and vanity had never yet sullied the purity and singleness of her mind.

She felt sorry that she had never had courage to thank George Lovell for taking her punishment upon himself, and had often asked Mrs. Griffiths how she could make him acquainted with her grateful feelings. A simple expedient was thought of. When the summer returned, and her grandmother went to carry his mother fresh eggs and butter, Florence would accompany her with a basket of the largest wood strawberries for Master George. This led to a slight acquaintance. George called at the cottage once or twice as he was passing through the wood, and once when he had taken a nest of young thrushes, he stopped and made a present of them to Florence. These birds were the unfortunate cause of the first quarrel that had ever taken place between Ralph and Florence.

Florence was delighted, as all children are, with the care of the poor little unfledged things, and had carefully placed them in a basket

with wool. Her grandmother had said 'You had better not show those to Ralph ;' but Flory was so proud of her treasure, that in the evening (he now went to the cottage every evening) she brought out her basket to show them.

'And you found them in the wood,' said Ralph, after sufficiently admiring them. 'No,' said Flory, timidly, 'I did not find them.'

'Goody, then? I did not think her old eyes were so sharp.'

'I have other things to look after when I go into the woods, and should not stoop to pick them up if they were under my feet,' said Goody.

'They did not fly in here, I am sure,' said Ralph; 'for they have no feathers on their wings.'

'Oh, no,' said Florence, looking up at Ralph, with a sweet smile, 'they were a gift.'

'A gift!' instantly the truth flashed upon his mind, and with a jerk of his thumb and fingers he had wrung the frail necks of two of the birds, and cast them far from him, before Florence could spring towards him and save the other bird from the same fate. 'Oh, Ralph!' she cried, and looked at him with a mingled expression of horror, pity, sorrow, and pain inexpressibly touching; and with the reserved bird in her

hand she sat down at a distance from him, and covered her face with her apron. She did not reproach him, for there was nothing like reproach in her gentle nature, but that instant there was opened between them a gulf as wide as the Atlantic. The moment is inexpressibly painful, when a gentle nature is repulsed, and its affections sent back upon the heart by the roughness or brutality of one they have confided in and loved. The aversion and disgust that they feel at an act of violence, clings to the person who commits it. They long to love again as they did at first, but they are robbed of a treasure, for where are the noble qualities that they loved yesterday? Effaced by the violence of to-day. It is true a gentle nature soon forgives, but woe to the affection where such violence is often repeated. True love is indeed enduring, like those plants whose roots spread under the soil, and which seem to be endowed with an eternal vitality; but the upward growth, and the tender blossom feels the first touch of frost, and is blighted by rough and cold weather. Ralph remained all the evening, and by a thousand little kind words tried to efface from Flory's mind the remembrance of his violence, and she, the gentle creature, smiled again, but there was a painful sense of wrong at her heart.

Ralph was now nearly sixteen years old. His clear brown complexion and flashing black eyes, his open, frank and intrepid appearance made him generally a favorite. Physiognomists, however, could detect in his countenance the marks of unrepressed and haughty passion, and the timid were generally afraid of offending him. The pastor of the village looked upon him with an anxious and deep interest, for he saw in him a noble nature, that had only needed a firm, decided, but gentle hand to have helped the boy in self-government, and made of him a character that would have been a blessing to the whole village ; and now Ralph was oftentimes a curse to himself, and a terror to his aunt. She began now to reap the fruits of her indolence and selfishness, in his bursts of passion. These she was accustomed to bear ; but his frequent sullenness, when in their contests for power she established her right to rule, were more painful, for he would then absent himself from home, and come back very late, merely to sleep under her roof. These days were spent at the cottage, in the soothing presence of Florence, where he was always happy.

The good pastor called at Mrs. Leonard's one afternoon at this season, while in the course of

his parish visiting. He found her alone, for Ralph was rarely at home. The pastor asked kindly after him. 'What are you going to do with the boy?' he said to his aunt; 'he will soon be beyond your control, for, if I mistake not, he will wish to have his own way.' 'Alas, sir,' she answered, 'it is long since I ceased to have any control over the boy,' and, wounded as she had been by some recent violence of Ralph's, she opened her heart, and poured out the anguish of her spirit at the undutiful conduct of her nephew. 'And all this after the indulgence I have shown him.' Mr. Newcome pitied her, kindly, but he feared it was too late to correct the mistakes of early life, and he asked if she appealed to his reason and affection.

'Ever since Ralph's birth,' said Miss Leonard, 'I have endeavored to govern him by reason and affection. I do not approve of coercion or of corporal punishment.' 'Ah,' said the pastor, 'I think you are mistaken. That a little child can be governed by reason, is one of the most fatal fallacies that a parent can entertain. Obedience is better than sacrifice. In governing a child by reason, you assume that your reason is perfect. Your authority, not your reason, should be infallible and absolute, and if it is not unjust or

unkind, the child will not suffer half as much as from the perversities of his own will. Habits of instant obedience are those that give rest and content to the child ; they spare its temper, and give it repose in the wisdom of another.'

'But,' said Miss Leonard, 'I could not run the risk of losing Ralph's affection by punishing him.'

'A spoilt child never loves the person who spoils him,' was the rather discouraging answer of the pastor.

'But I would not have him *fear* me,' said Miss Leonard, with a deep sigh, for she could not but perceive that Ralph did not love her society. 'I wished to have that perfect love between us, that casts out fear.'

'There must be fear before the love is made perfect, and the child that is not made to obey in his infancy, is deprived of all the sweet repose to be found in duty and obedience, and also of the blessing of a deeper love.' 'But,' — and he checked his observations, for the poor woman's distress told him that it was too late to hope to effect any reform ; that the seeds had been sown, and the bitter fruit must infallibly follow.

'I see not what you can *now* do,' said he, kindly, 'but appeal to Ralph's affections, and to

his pride of character, which is strong, or I am no physiognomist. When he is least under the influence of passion, then appeal to his honor and to his lingering affection.'

Miss Leonard sadly shook her head.

'Would it not be well to send him from home?' asked Mr. Newcome. 'Let him go for a quarter to the academy at P., and while separated from you, his sense of duty and obedience may return.'

'It would be in vain to persuade him to leave this village,' she said; and she entered upon the history of his infatuation, respecting the little orphan Florence, and his devotion to her ever since the first day he met her at school. Mr. Newcome thought this generous and unselfish passion might be a great instrument in the improvement of Ralph; that it would soften and humanize his nature; that Florence's influence was better than preaching or discipline; and he advised Miss Leonard to place no obstacle in the way of his intercourse with her.

But Miss Leonard's and the pastor's feelings, with regard to Flory, were as opposite as the poles. He looked upon her as a lovely and interesting child, in no degree disparaged by being the orphan of French parents, thrown upon the care of the parish; and that Ralph would be

almost too blest, if, when he was older, he could obtain the affections of such a creature for a wife; so richly endowed with gifts that would make a blessing to any man's home. 'For my part,' said he, 'if I had a son, it would be the richest blessing I would ask for him, to obtain the love of such an angel of intelligence, and sweetness, and beauty, as Florence will be.'

Miss Leonard shrugged her shoulders, What! the owner of this farm, descended from the first family in the village, the heir of all her savings, condescend to match with a town pauper, whose parents were unknown; and who knew, perhaps disgrace also rested on her birth! What was all the tender, womanly beauty and goodness of Florence, to the selfishness of a nature, accustomed to look upon the material interests of life as the only true interests; and who expected Ralph to form a connection that should not only add acres to the farm, but worldly advantages to the family?

The autumn and winter were again approaching. Ralph had observed the dilapidated state of the Goody's cottage, admitting the snow and rain upon their very beds, and had inquired of the village carpenter the expense of repairing

and making it whole for the winter. It was a sum larger than the overseers were willing to expend, and Ralph, counting upon his own right to a part of the income of the farm, told the carpenter to go on with the repairs, and he would himself see that he was paid. The shrewd Yankee knew that it was doubtful whether Marm Sarah, as she was called in the village, would advance the money, but he made the charge, and reckoned upon the payment, with compound interest, in five years, when Ralph would be of age and responsible for the debt.

It was now October, that most touching season, for its tender and melancholy beauty, of all the New England year. The trees were in the sear and yellow leaf, and every breeze brought them in showers to the ground. But autumn winds were hushed, and the Sabbath stillness of the woods was only interrupted by sounds associated with the decline of the year, and soothing to the ear of a lover of wood solitude; the rare whistle of the robin, and the cheep-cheep, of the blackbirds, as they were gathering together, preparatory to their winter migration; the falling of the nuts, and the rustle of the squirrel as he darted through the leaves, hardly

seen, except by the glancing of his tail in the sunlight. Then suddenly a flock of brown quails, rising whirring from the ground, and the gun of the fowler that followed their flight; but the last sound rarely startled the ear, in the last century in New England. As evening drew on, and the twilight deepened over the woods, the cow, finding scantier pasture, would come earlier home, straying slowly and quietly to the cottage door, waiting patiently there till the well known voice of Florence greeted her like a friend, brought her the evening meal, and relieved her from the fragrant burthen that rewarded her for her constant care.

## CHAPTER IV.

THERE is one festival that is, or that used to be, peculiar to New England in the last century. It took place after the harvest was all gathered in, and consisted in husking the Indian corn; that is, stripping off the leaves of the calix from the ear. It was the only festival except the annual thanksgiving, that was really enjoyed in the rural homes and farm-houses of New England.

Mr. Street, the most extensive farmer in our village, had invited all his neighbors, and all the young people of the village to such a festival, and had assembled, together with his own laborers, about forty persons of both sexes. Florence and her grandmother were among the invited; Ralph and his aunt; but she was too dignified and too rich to partake of an amusement intended for the vulgar. The minister was expected to look in at the supper, when Mr. Street's own daughters would be present. The husking was to take place in a long unfinished room which extended over the out-houses, and partly over

the barn. It was lighted in the most primitive manner by candles placed each in a cleft stick, and the stick stuck into the interstices of the beams. Here the Indian corn in the sheaf was heaped at one end of the chamber, and the huskers, men and young women, sat upon the floor. The calix was all stripped off, except one or two leaves left upon each ear to serve to braid it into a wreath ; and thus the corn which was not for immediate use, was festooned around the chamber.

The order and delicacy which is said to prevail in all assemblies of young people in New England was not violated here. The only occurrence that called up even a blush upon the fairest cheek, was that which made it necessary for the young girl who found a red ear among her heap to exhibit it, and it entitled the person who sat next, to claim a kiss from lips that blushed a deeper crimson than the corn. The husking this evening was expected to be followed by a dance ; the village fiddler being there, with his old violin, and as soon as the corn was finished the dance was to begin. There was one rule of the evening that occasioned more laughter and embarrassment than even the custom that permitted the lips of the

chance possessor of a red ear to be rifled of a kiss. The rule was, that the finders of the two first red ears of corn, were condemned to be partners in the dance, and so on to the third and fourth, the fifth and sixth. This led to the most ludicrous mismatching of partners, and to the utmost finesse and manœuvring on the part of the young men and the girls too, to conceal their red ears till the partner they preferred proclaimed her own.

A drummer, who had served in the war of the revolution, and returned wounded to his native village, had gained his precarious livelihood since, by teaching the village youth to dance. He had lost his right arm, but the music of the left drum-stick was sufficient, especially when assisted by the above named fiddler, who was also maimed, having been shot through the knee, and obliged to lose the leg, and walk with a crutch. Florence had been taught to dance by the drummer, and such was her natural aptitude for the national accomplishment of her own country, that the drummer would not receive the small compensation given by others; 'for,' said he, 'her example is worth more than the money twice over.' Her natural grace, the readiness with which she caught the figures of

the contra dance ; the ease and lightness of her figure, and its simple grace was pleasing even in the New England barn and among rustics, where her exquisite loveliness was little noticed.

George Lovell was expected among the guests, and there was much speculation whether the lawyer's son would condescend to be reckoned among the humbler youth, invited to the husking. Ralph was burning with impatience for the red ears to appear, and had just congratulated himself that his rival would not come, when he made his appearance at the entrance of the chamber.

George had sat but a few moments, and had hardly stripped a dozen ears, when Florence and himself, at the very same instant, proclaimed a red one. The announcement, which was simultaneous, so that neither could be accused of collusion, was received with shouts of laughter, and poor Flory blushed crimson when George, according to custom, modestly claimed his tribute from her lips. Florence would have given the world to escape. She was timid and ashamed, and when she stole a look at Ralph, she saw that he was deadly pale, and that he had upon his countenance that expression of rage which she had seen once before, when he wrung the necks

of her birds. She trembled, and shrank back as though George's lips had been red-hot when he touched them to her cheek.

The dancing soon began, and, according to the rule of the evening, Florence and George must stand up together at the head of the first contra dance. Ralph would not dance, and whenever Florence stole a glance at his face, she saw there the same pale cheek and gloomy frown. But the fiddle and drum, and the exhilarating dance of the *Maid of the mill*, and the pleasure of motion, and the admiring glances of George, altogether inspired Florence with the most animated joy. She forgot Ralph, and her beautiful face expressed the happiness she would have showered upon every one. One dance only was exacted by the possessor of the crimson ear of corn. As soon, therefore, as it was finished, she sought Ralph. He was nowhere to be found ; maddened with jealousy at the apparent pleasure with which Florence danced with his rival, he could endure the sight no longer, but rushed out into the cold night air to try to cool the fever of his passion.

Let not the fair young belle of the city ball, who has spent whole weeks in the preparation of her splendid costume ; whose diamonds are only

less brilliant than her eyes; where the wax-lighted apartment, and the lovely flowers intoxicate the senses with their ravishing perfumes; let her not look with scorn upon our humble annals; she, perhaps, by her designed preference of another, thrusts an arrow deep into a faithful lover's heart; let her not imagine that the barbed agony is felt only by aristocratic bosoms. The same passions burn perhaps with an intenser pain under the laborer's blouse, than under the embroidered waistcoat; for in the breast of the former they usually reign alone, in solitary misery; while the educated and rich can command hosts of allurements to divide the umpire of passion.

Florence soon went out to seek for Ralph. The idea of giving him pain was insupportable to the heart that had so often experienced his generosity. She found him far from the house, leaning against a tree, with his eyes fixed upon the lighted windows. Then shame overcame her, and the fear that he would misunderstand the feeling which led her to him, and she paused. Ralph moved not, and took no notice, though he felt her near. Florence almost wept; then she murmured his name; he turned towards her, and she rushed into his arms. 'Ralph,' she said,

“I am ready to dance with you; hark, the music; I have been looking for you to dance this time with me.” Ralph was soothed. They went back together, and took their places at the foot of the long contra dance.

The supper that succeeded was served in the farmer’s long kitchen. The tables were loaded with the liberal product of a New England farm; a famous turkey at the head, and a leg of cold pork at the foot; while the centre was filled up with pies, from the enormous pumpkin pie, baked in a milk-pan, to the modest cranberry tart, no larger than a lady’s hand. The new unfermented juice of the apple was there, for the weak heads, and the bottled cider, whose corks flew out like those of the best champagne. The minister had taken part in the cheerful chastened mirth of the table; but when the old clock in the corner struck ten, he rose to return thanks for the enjoyment of all these good things. So habitual was the reverence of our fathers for all religious observances, that all instantly rose, and remained standing, serious, reverent, while the pastor in rather a long benediction, dismissed them to their repose. The young people, however, returned to the dancing loft for the finale of Yankee-doodle, and were soon gayer than ever, with reels, gigs, and rustic gallopades.

As the night verged to the small hours, the young people sought their homes. The night was very cold, and as Ralph went out with Florence, she had only a thin, summer shawl to throw over her person, glowing with the heat of the dance. Poor Florence made no pretensions to delicacy, but this slight circumstance led to fatal consequences in the result of our little tale. Where is your cloak? he asked. The cloak of former years, too much worn out to be of further use, had been quilted into a covering for the Goody's bed. You shall have a cloak, said Ralph, before the next husking, and he left her at the door of the cottage.

The next day Ralph determined to put in execution his grand plan, which was to obtain some money from his aunt—not only to pay the carpenter, but to purchase the warm cloak for Florence. 'Well, aunt,' he began, 'have you got good prices for the harvest? I see that it is all sold.' 'Very poor—very poor,' she said, 'Mr. Street paid me but a dollar a barrel for the apples, and he gets four dollars for his cider, and all he has to do is to turn them into his mill.' 'Ah, he has much more than that to do, to turn out such champagne as we had last night,' said Ralph. 'But the inn-keeper at P.

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paid you a good price for the oats, for he told me you screwed him down to the last copper.'

'*He* talk of screwing, when he is the sharpest man at a bargain in the Bay State,' said Miss Leonard.

'But not the sharpest woman, aunt,' said Ralph.

'Come, aunt,' continued Ralph, 'you must let me have twenty dollars; half the produce you know is mine, and I have had no penny of the farm money since last May.'

'Well, and what do you think has paid for your clothes, and your board, and Mr. Hobbs for shoes, and —— ?'

'Pooh, aunt, you know that is nothing, and I am determined to have the twenty dollars I asked you for; I do not rob you, for it is mine.'

'Wait till next May,' said his aunt, willing to soothe him, 'when you will be seventeen years old, and we will settle accounts, and I will pay over to you half the surplus of the year, and you shall pay for your board and clothes yourself.'

'That will not do,' said Ralph, 'I have a use for the money this month, and I must have it.'

'That depends on me,' said his aunt.

Ralph's passion began to rise. 'I know where

you keep your money, and the key of the drawer, and if you will not give it to me, I will take it; so I give you fair warning,' and his manner and look were most determined.

At this moment his aunt perceived that which Ralph had not observed, that the key of the drawer in an old secretary, where the money was kept, and where she had just deposited the price of the oats, was in the lock, and she rose to withdraw it. Ralph also became aware of her purpose, and caught her hand as she was removing the key. His personal strength was far greater than hers, and in an instant it was wrested from her, and he had opened the drawer and taken out a handful of money, which he did not stop to count. But the energy of his aunt was now completely roused. She was pale with anger, and trembled like a leaf. But she threw open the window, and called to the farm servant, who was at work near by. He was a man of six feet, and proportionally strong, and as he came in, she pointed at Ralph, and ordered the man to seize him, and restore to her the money that he was still counting.

Ralph stood at bay like a young animal. He was tall, slender and supple, but no match for the strength of the other. His hands were soon

secured, and the money seized. And his aunt, losing all self-possession, and all dignity of anger, give him, while he was powerless in the grasp of the farmer, several severe blows upon the ears.

It would be impossible to give the reader an idea of the burning and boundless wrath that now struggled in Ralph's breast. Now came the crisis, when the passions which had never been checked, became too mighty for the control of the reason that had never been exercised, or of the conscience only partially enlightened. Now the aunt was doomed to see her proud structure of education fall into dust. Rage, shame, mortification, disappointment, and a sense of deep injustice, all struggled for mastery, and if Ralph had not rushed from the house, he might have committed some deed of violence ; perhaps have murdered his aunt while under this temporary madness. It is thus, reader, that insanity sometimes comes on : at every fresh burst of passion, the victim is less and less able to control the madness.

He rushed from the house, swearing that he would never enter it again ; that he would never cross the threshold of his father's door, while his aunt dwelt there ; and he kept his word. He

spent the whole day wandering about in the woods, and late in the evening he knocked at the door of Mrs. Griffiths' cottage. When opened to him, both were frightened at his pale and haggard face. He sat down by the corner of the fire, and, while overwhelmed with shame, Florence wrung from him the history of the morning. He declared to them both, that he loved his aunt, but that after what had passed, they could no longer live under the same roof.

Mrs. Griffiths urged upon him the duty of going back, submitting to his aunt, and making an apology, asking her forgiveness. This was gall and wormwood to a temper like his; beside, he insisted that his aunt was the aggressor, that the money was his, and that he would have it. 'What would he do?' she asked. 'He should go to-morrow to P., engage himself in some outward bound vessel, as a sailor, and go to foreign countries, where he should earn his living. His aunt might enjoy the whole, till he was twenty-one, when half the farm, by law, would be his own.' It was in vain that Mrs. Griffiths appealed to his affection for Florence, his duty, his own interests; he remained fixed in his plan, proving the truth of the saying, that it is easier to break than to bend a proud spirit.

Florence had said not a word. She sat with earnest and tearful eyes fixed upon Ralph, and when Mrs. Griffiths appealed to his affection for her, she smiled only ; but when she described their desolate state without him, she covered her face with her apron, and wept silently. It was near midnight, and Mrs. Griffiths again urged him to go home. No, that he would never do. He would sleep that night in the loft of the little shed that sheltered the cow ; it was nearly full of hay and cornstalks, the fodder for the cow, but that would make it warmer.

Just as the day dawned the next morning, Florence was roused from her fitful and imperfect sleep, by a tap at the little window at the head of her bed. She rose and went out. Ralph stood just beside the door. His face was swollen, as if with weeping, and his voice trembled, 'I could not go,' he said, 'without saying a word more to you, Flory. Will you try to remember me ; and oh, Flory, forget how violent I have been, and never think of the poor birds — and — Flory,' he added, 'go sometimes to see my aunt.' 'Oh, Ralph !' cried Florence, 'how can you go and leave us all ? What shall we do without you ? what shall I do ? You have been so kind !' and, overcome by a flood of grateful recollections,

she burst into tears. ‘Don’t cry,’ said Ralph, hastily, ‘I cannot bear that. Florence, promise me that you will never speak to George Lovell; that you will never dance with him, or walk with him! ’

‘I shall never dance again,’ said Florence, bitterly.

‘I will come back in four years, and then, Flory, we will dance together again; and when the farm is mine, then we will always live together—and—and,’ he had not courage to add, ‘and you shall be my wife;’ but it was implied, and he looked cheerfully in her face.

Florence did not smile. She scarcely understood the meaning he meant to insinuate; she only shook her head sadly, and said, ‘Four long winters must pass, and where will you be, Ralph, all that weary time?’ ‘I shall be in countries where there is no cold weather, no winter. I’ll go to France, Flory, and perhaps find out your relations, and come home and tell you all about them.’

Florence now smiled, and brighter ideas filled her imagination; for, unselfish as she was, the thought of Ralph’s solitude, when he should be away from her, had been heavier to her than that of her own.



They walked along the path together, which led to the stile. Ralph had thrown his arm round Florence, and they had been some moments silent. ‘Promise me again,’ he said, ‘that you will not speak to George, nor let him come to the cottage.’

‘I cannot promise *that*,’ said Florence, for he has always been kind to me.’

‘Well, promise only that you will not dance with him, or walk in the woods with him, or let him walk home from meeting with you.’

‘Ralph,’ said Florence, for a thought came into her mind, ‘I will promise not to dance nor to walk with George, if you will promise *me* one thing.’

‘What is it? I will promise you any thing in my power.’

‘It is in your power, Ralph, never to get into such violent fits of passion, and never to do things in a passion, which make you so sorry afterwards.’

Ralph’s pride was raised in a moment. ‘What things?’ he demanded.

‘Why’—and she hesitated, ‘such as made you kill my birds, and makes you now leave us all, Ralph, and go, you know not where.’

Ralph was silent, embarrassed, and mortified.

‘Florence,’ he at length said, ‘I was never

made to govern my passions when I was a child. I was indulged in every thing by my poor aunt, and now my temper is too strong for me ; I cannot help it.'

'I know it, I know it, dear Ralph ; but promise me that you will try, and I will never dance or walk with George Lovell.'

They had now reached the stile at the entrance of the wood ; the rim of the sun was just above the horizon, and flooded the whole heaven with crimson, while the beams of light sparkled upon myriads of drops of dew, hanging upon every leaf, and filling every blade of grass with the purest diamonds. The rich colors of the autumn tints, crossed by the stems and branches of the trees, seemed to convert the forest into a vast cathedral, in which these two young creatures were the only worshippers. Not a breath of air stirred the leaves ; not a sound broke the majestic repose of the rising sun. Only these two, as they stood together with a world of woe, in the passions with which their hearts were beating. Florence exhibited outwardly, less emotion, for she had been educated in self-government, in self-denial, in fact in an annihilation of self, to which Ralph was a stranger ; but that she felt the agony of the

moment, was seen in the ashy paleness of her cheek, her sunken eye, and the trembling of the lips usually crimson with health, but now livid and convulsed. ‘Promise!’ said Ralph, seizing both her hands. ‘Let us both promise,’ said Florence, and she took from her bosom the ivory crucifix of her mother’s; ‘let us promise each other upon this; and oh Ralph, it will be doubly wicked if we break it.’

They made these vows, there in the presence of the rising sun, Florence to avoid any intimacy whatever with George, and Ralph to exert every power within him, to command his sudden, and impetuous, and violent passions. To Ralph, educated in the Puritan faith of New England, the crucifix gave no additional solemnity; but to Florence, as it had been to her mother the emblem of worship, to have broken her vow would have been the deepest sin. With both the vow was at the moment sacred, and the dew which exhaled to heaven with the beams of the morning, was not more pure and true than were these young hearts to each other.

Ralph went immediately to P., from whence he worked his passage in a coasting schooner to Boston, and there entered as a common seaman in a ship bound to Canton. His plan was to

remain away till he was of age, which would be in about three years and a half. His intention was then to return and claim his part of the property, marry Florence, and settle in some part of the country where he could gain a livelihood. He had no wish to deprive his aunt of the farm ; but from the incompatibility of their tempers, his violence and her avarice, he had decided that they could not live under the same roof.

We do not justify Ralph, but we wish to represent him, with the exception of one extreme fault, as a noble and generous youth. We now leave him for a short time: that he religiously respected his vow, would be too much to assert ; but every time he gave way to a burst of passion, he thought of Florence, and like Peter, shed bitter tears of penitence.

## CHAPTER V.

THE winter which succeeded Ralph's departure was long and unusually stormy. Florence used to lie, listening to the winds that rocked the old oaks above the cottage roof, her little heart trembling at the thought of the danger and perils which Ralph was encountering upon his unknown ocean home ; and the prayer would escape from her lips, and the tear from her eye, before sleep soothed her into a blessed forgetfulness. Mrs. Griffiths became ill, and upon Florence devolved all the hardships of housekeeping. The overseers, it is true, supplied them with necessaries, and the neighbors were kind, but as for poor Florence, there was no one to alleviate her heavy responsibility by sympathy, or to soothe her solitude by kind inquiries and attentions so precious, because they were so gladly paid. She had no temptation to break her vow ; her wishes never strayed, even in thought, from Ralph.

It would be difficult, perhaps, to define exactly the feelings of the transparent nature of Florence. At first it was childish gratitude for

kindness ; then, as she found him so tenacious and exclusive, and after his quarrel with George, fear mingled with her gratitude. She was afraid of offending him. He had never hinted to her of love or marriage, but for that she was too young ; but he had, as it were, appropriated and bound her to himself by ties of the strongest force to a generous nature, and there was no wish on her part to sever them ; but had he often exhibited the temper that he did when he killed the birds, her heart would soon have been estranged from him, and perhaps the ties that united them were strengthened by his absence. She missed him, and every day, as it passed in sad and weary solitude, found her longing for his return.

In March, Mrs. Griffiths died. Now poor Florence was again thrown upon the tender mercies of the parish. She was now nearly sixteen years old, tall and slender. Since we described her last, she had acquired a shade of thoughtfulness and reflection, foreign to that spontaneous unconsciousness which had been her peculiar charm. It was her responsibility to Ralph, which had given a shade of care to her lovely brow. It indicated that her vow

was not wholly spontaneous ; that it was a *vow*, and not an instinct.

The overseers, wise and thoughtful men, took into consideration her peculiar comeliness, as they called her exquisite loveliness, and sought for her a place where her youth should be shielded from danger. It so happened that Mrs. Lovell wanted a young person to assist her in the cares of her family, and Mr. Lovell applied to the overseers just at the moment when they were at a loss what to do with Florence. 'It was providential,' they said ; 'the very home for the child ; sober, pious, faithful guardians ; surely Providence watched over the sparrows, and heard the young ravens when they cried.'

The next day, one of the faithful guardians of the village poor took the pains to walk into the wood, to inform Florence of her good fortune, and to order her to repair the next morning, early and with clothes clean, and in good order, to her new mistress.

The only answer the poor girl could make, was a burst of passionate tears. The venerable gentleman believed it was an expression of sorrow for the loss of her old friend, and made some clumsy attempts at consolation ; but poor Flory could not be comforted. An abyss had

suddenly opened before her, and she felt as if there were no escape ; and how could she confide to the aged gentleman before her, her difficulties, insurmountable in her opinion, but to him they would be trifles ; while, with her sacred and conscientious regard for her vow to Ralph and to God, it would be a violation of conscience, a deadly sin against God, as well as against Ralph, and a perjury upon her own soul. O, which way should she turn, and where should she go ? She begged but one day more in her old home, and with such agony of entreaty, that the overseer was touched with her distress, and pitying her gentle and her forlorn condition, promised that she should not be obliged to leave the forest till she was quite ready.

When she was alone, in the extremity of her distress, she could only fall upon her knees and cry, Help ! help ! Her prayer was heard ; help was near. The Rev. Mr. Newcome, the minister, who knew Florence well, for she had been constant at catechising, and lately had been admitted to sing with the choir, and now he had not forgotten her. He left his home for the purpose of inquiring for the orphan, and arrived at the cottage just as the extremity of her distress had wrung from her this despairing cry. He

soothed her by his sympathy, and induced her, by the tenderness of his inquiries, to confide to him the history of her difficulties, so that he could understand and relieve her embarrassment.

When he had listened to the simple tale of her distress, told with a touching air of truth and nature, he said, 'That going to live at Mrs. Lovell's would not be violating her vow to Ralph, for she would not be compelled to dance or to walk with the son of the house, and that he probably would not covet her society.' Florence blushed. It would have been a violation of maidenly delicacy to tell the pastor that George had often sought to force upon her attentions, that, if it had not been for Ralph's jealousy she should have received with gratitude. At length she said, 'Would it not be putting myself in the way of breaking my vow, if I were to live under the same roof with him; and Mr. George has been very kind to me?'

The clear-sighted pastor saw at once the difficulty, and the delicacy of Flora's feelings, to whom the suspicion of intrigue or forwardness was a painful wound. 'Well,' he said, 'you shall come and live with Mrs. Newcome. We have no grown up boys to make Master Ralph

jealous. He deserves, however, to suffer a little; the bad boy !'

Florence was soon on the way to her new home. The genial influence of the cultivated and excellent family with whom she now associated was soon apparent in her improved cheerfulness and happiness. Her intellect, which had always been quick, received a new impulse from books, and from the society of persons so much superior to those with whom she had been thrown. She had now found her own sphere. She had been, before, lovely; she now became polished; and if she had lost in some degree the sweet natural wildness of the field flower, she acquired a serene and composed loveliness, the expression of the opening soul. Whoever had seen them together, would have said she was far superior to Ralph, and she appeared, indeed, the equal of any young man in the village. She began to attract attention from Mr. Newcome's guests; and George Lovell became a constant visiter at the parsonage.

Thus, the three years passed away, and nothing whatever had been heard from Ralph. Mr. Newcome now began to favor the suit of George. He had always been of the opinion that Flory's happiness would be more secure

with the mild, gentlemanly, and good-tempered George, than in an union with so ill regulated and violent a character as Ralph. But he had scrupulously respected Flory's implied engagement to the latter, until the time that he had set for his return had passed. He then began to urge upon her the folly of suffering the implied bond to one who had probably perished at sea, to prevent her from forming a connection with one so every way formed to secure her a happy home, and every blessing dear to woman's heart.

George had made no secret of his attachment to Florence, ever since his attention was drawn to the little orphan school-girl, whose punishment he had been induced to take from pity, because she was so pretty and interesting, and not because it was a girl that was to suffer. Since she had been one of the clergyman's family, his parents, of whom he was the only son, had given their unqualified assent to his union with her. Mr. Lovell had wisely overlooked the circumstance of her having been the parish orphan. He knew that she was the child of a French officer, of as unblemished descent as his own, and that the fact of her early destitution only proved what native qualities could do to form the loveliest of characters.

When Florence was urged then to bind herself to George, she only entreated for time ; and when the characters of the two young men were contrasted, she thought of Ralph's generosity to her, of his ardent, his almost frantic attachment ; and pleaded in excuse for him the disadvantages of his education, and for herself the misery of having him return to find she had given herself to another.

She had scrupulously kept her vow. She had never walked or danced with George ; but *that* she knew was not sufficient. Until the end of the three years, she had in no degree violated the spirit of her vow. We have said before, that Flory's feelings towards Ralph were made up of gratitude for his preference of her ; a deep sense of obligation for kindness, and the attachment that is formed from habit,—the habit of being together, and depending upon each other. The tie between them was strong, but not unmixed with fear on the part of Florence ; and that shrinking from violence, which, if it had been often repeated, would have crushed the timid tenderness of love in her bosom, and have caused it to wither at the root. It was not the instinctive attachment of two young hearts, twined together, as it were, in heaven, whose

perfect love casts out all fear, and whose union creates on earth the bliss of heaven.

To have seen *George* and Flory together, one would have said that between them was that calm and trusting affection, whose sober certainty is perfect bliss. And had it not been for Flory's previous bonds, had they met each other only three years before, their union would have been like two drops of limpid water mingling into one.

Winters and summers had succeeded each other; the breathing, living spring had been three times new born from the white grave of winter, and the summer had three times faded into the sear and yellow leaf, since Ralph braved the unknown hardships of the ocean. It was now the fourth year, and in the midst of the warm, dry summer of New England, exquisite in the clearness and beauty of the atmosphere, and perfect but for the intense heat. I have mentioned the high bluff that guarded at one extremity the little sandy beach of our village. There was a perpendicular declivity of more than a hundred feet, and it was probable that it must at some time have had a yet greater altitude, for at the foot of the cliff were rocks of fallen granite, hidden at high water, but over which, in stormy

weather, the sea beat with terrific violence, sending the spray to the very summit of the cliff. The surface of this precipice was covered with close cropped turf. The authorities of the village had often talked of guarding it with a railing, as it was a dangerous place. Sheep and cattle had sometimes fallen over, and found instant death upon the rocks below.

It was a favorite walk with Florence ; often, in memory of their parting hour, she had gone there at the rising of the sun, to send her thoughts and prayers far over the sea in search of him whose vows had mingled with hers at that very hour, the last day he breathed his native air. She had chosen that hour also because she was free from intrusion ; but now, she had walked there towards evening, and stood looking out far into the purple expanse, while the glimpses of the setting sun were changing the waves to burnished gold. She was counting the white sails upon the verge of the horizon, that, catching for an instant the rays of the sun, flashed out like the white wings of birds ; and her thoughts, were they devoted to the lost Ralph, or had they strayed to the constant and faithful George ? Perhaps the latter ; for, as she saw him approaching her, a deep blush over-

spread her lovely face. 'Flory,' said he, 'are you looking for Ralph?' 'Oh no, for he will not come to this beach in a boat; we shall first see him on land. But I love,' and she hesitated, 'I love to look at the ocean.' 'Perhaps,' said he, 'Ralph is in that very ship,' and he pointed to the one nearest in shore. Florence turned deadly pale. 'Perhaps,' she said, faintly, and then added, 'Oh, George; that my uncertainty was at an end.' 'Would to God, Florence, that it was; but if you were to know that he had perished at sea, would your heart be buried in the deep waves with him?' 'George,' she answered, 'tempt me not till the four years are passed. I loved Ralph, for he was my friend when I had no other, and I will be true to him; if alive, I will be true to him; if dead, lost in the sea, let me wait till I am certain of the fact, and then ——'

Perhaps the reader has felt that there was a perfect understanding between these young people of the feelings of each other, but that George always had the delicacy to respect Florence's position, and never talked to her of love. Now, however, the peculiarly tender hour of the evening, turning all his mind to tenderness, and awakening his passion for the beautiful orphan,

who stood so near him in all her loveliness and trusting innocence, that he could not restrain the emotion that overpowered him. 'Give me but one promise, Flory,' he said, 'and I will wait and be satisfied. Should the fourth year pass, and you hear nothing of Ralph, then let me tell you of my love; then only let me plead my long cherished love for you; promise me this one little favor;' and he held out his hands and took hers within them both.

They stood with their faces towards the sea, and close to the edge of the cliff. The long heats of summer had dried the short turf, and it was slippery as a polished floor. George became aware of Florence's dangerous position, and was drawing her quickly back; for that purpose he placed his arm around her shoulder. At this moment they heard a footprint, and turned instantly. It was Ralph himself rushing towards them!

He had arrived only a short hour ago — had been instantly to the cottage in the wood, for he had not heard a syllable from Florence. Finding it empty, his inquiries had directed him breathless to Mr. Newcome's; there he had been told that Florence had walked *alone* towards the sea-beach. With a thousand varying feelings, in

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which hope and joy, love, and the certainty of a blissful meeting predominated, he instantly took the well known path to the cliff. He had walked through it a thousand times with the beloved little girl ; and now he had escaped from so many terrible dangers, thrice had he been shipwrecked, and once taken by the pirates — all this he would tell her ; and imagination pictured coming days of bliss, when they would never part more !

It would fill many pages to relate the vicissitudes of Ralph's life, and the various untoward events, which by energy and indomitable resolution he had surmounted, since he parted with Florence. He had endured the hardships of the life of a boy 'before the mast,' and had steadily worked his way upwards, so that he would return master of a brig and in profitable trade. In the progress he had displayed every species of hardihood, but he ever held before him the star of hope and promise in the recollection of Florence, beloved to-day, as she was in the day he left her. He had suffered shipwreck as often as St. Paul ; had been made prisoner by Algerine pirates, and for more than a year subjected to the worse species of slavery, that which the whites inflict upon those of their own color.

Ralph was endowed with a large portion of the elasticity and inflexibility which belongs to the New England character. He had been able to surmount these difficulties, and, like blocks of granite subjected to perpetual motion, his character had become rounded and polished by the constant attrition. One trial more bitter than the rest he had lately encountered. Meeting in the last port he made, in order to take in water, a young man from his native village, who, carelessly telling the news, said among other items, that Florence had gone to live with the parents of George Lovell, and that the common talk of the village was, that they were to be married in the autumn.

Ralph turned whiter than the mainsail of his vessel. 'Take back what you have said,' he cried, 'or I'll teach you what it is to slander a poor girl that you do not know, and are not fit to speak of.'

The young man trembled; he had only repeated what he had heard; he could not say that it was true, and looking in Ralph's face which was livid with passion, he hastily added, that he did not himself believe it.

This saved him, for the lion was roused within Ralph, and no one can tell where it would have led him.

Home now he must instantly return, sell his brig and his cargo, for he did not love the sea, and return to Florence. There he could find out the truth. He could not, he dared not believe that Florence had forgotten him. His faith in her, till the moment of this slanderous lie, had been like his faith in Heaven.

As he drew near his native village, for he had made the port of P——, and hurrying through the necessary business, had walked immediately towards the only home he had ever found, the home of his heart, where Florence dwelt. As he drew near and saw the same hills, the transparent winding river, the little bridge which he must cross, the same old man stood at the toll-house, the same who had taken his cent when he crossed as a boy. He did not recognize Ralph, and the latter turned aside his head, for his heart was too full to allow him to speak.

After crossing the bridge he ascended a little rising ground, and now he saw the windows of the parsonage and of Mr. Lovell's house, all shining in the setting sun; the lengthened shadows of the elms across the meeting-house green, and a peace like that of the hour descended into his soul. Instantly, as we said before, he turned aside to the cottage in the

wood, afterwards to Mr. Newcome's, where he learnt the direction Florence had taken.

He was rising with a rapid step, the summit of the cliff, at the moment that George placed his arm upon Florence's shoulder, to draw her from the brink — there he stopped, as though petrified, and turned to stone. Florence attempted to spring towards him, crying, 'Dear Ralph!' The sound of her voice awoke the madness of his sleeping passions. Spreading out his arms, and rushing between them, as though he would throw himself from the cliff, 'Stand off!' he cried, and as he rushed past, by accident or design, he gave Florence a severe blow upon the breast. She staggered backward — her foot slipped upon the dry turf, and reeling, before an arm could be extended, or a cry uttered, she was dashed over the top of the cliff.

Then was heard from both those young men, a cry of mortal anguish, such as few have ever lived to hear. An instant they glared at each other, then rushed to the bottom of the cliff. It was half-tide, and the rocks were partly bare. Florence had fallen upon her back, but she still breathed. They dashed water in her face, and she opened her eyes. She knew Ralph, as he bent over her in unutterable agony; the crucifix

that had fallen from her bosom, touched her hand ; she raised it to her lips, and whispered, ‘ Ralph, I was faithful to our vow.’ With these words, the soul departed — the beautiful eyes were closed, and the tenderness of the loving lips set in everlasting repose.

Florence was laid by the side of her mother, in the corner, shaded by the old pear-tree, and this simple inscription marked the spot, —

FLORENCE, THE PARISH ORPHAN.

At the trial that took place immediately after the funeral, Ralph pleaded guilty : but the testimony of George was so strong and explicit that there *could* have been no premeditated injury intended, that he was acquitted by an undivided jury. He immediately left our village, and nothing more was heard of him. His aunt still cultivated his farm, and persisted in accumulating and in laying up riches for her nephew ; always expecting he would return, and always disappointed. She lived alone, to an extreme old age, helpless and infirm. At length she was persuaded to let the farm, and to go herself where her last days might be made more comfortable, as they drew to their close. Still she lingered,

and still she said that Ralph would return and enjoy his own.

At length the new farmer's family were obliged to move into the house. Mr. Newcome came, and with all tenderness took her to her new home, but, like a plant whose roots have penetrated deep into the soil, transplanting proved fatal to her, and Miss Leonard, without any apparent illness, faded away, and died the first night of her removal.\*

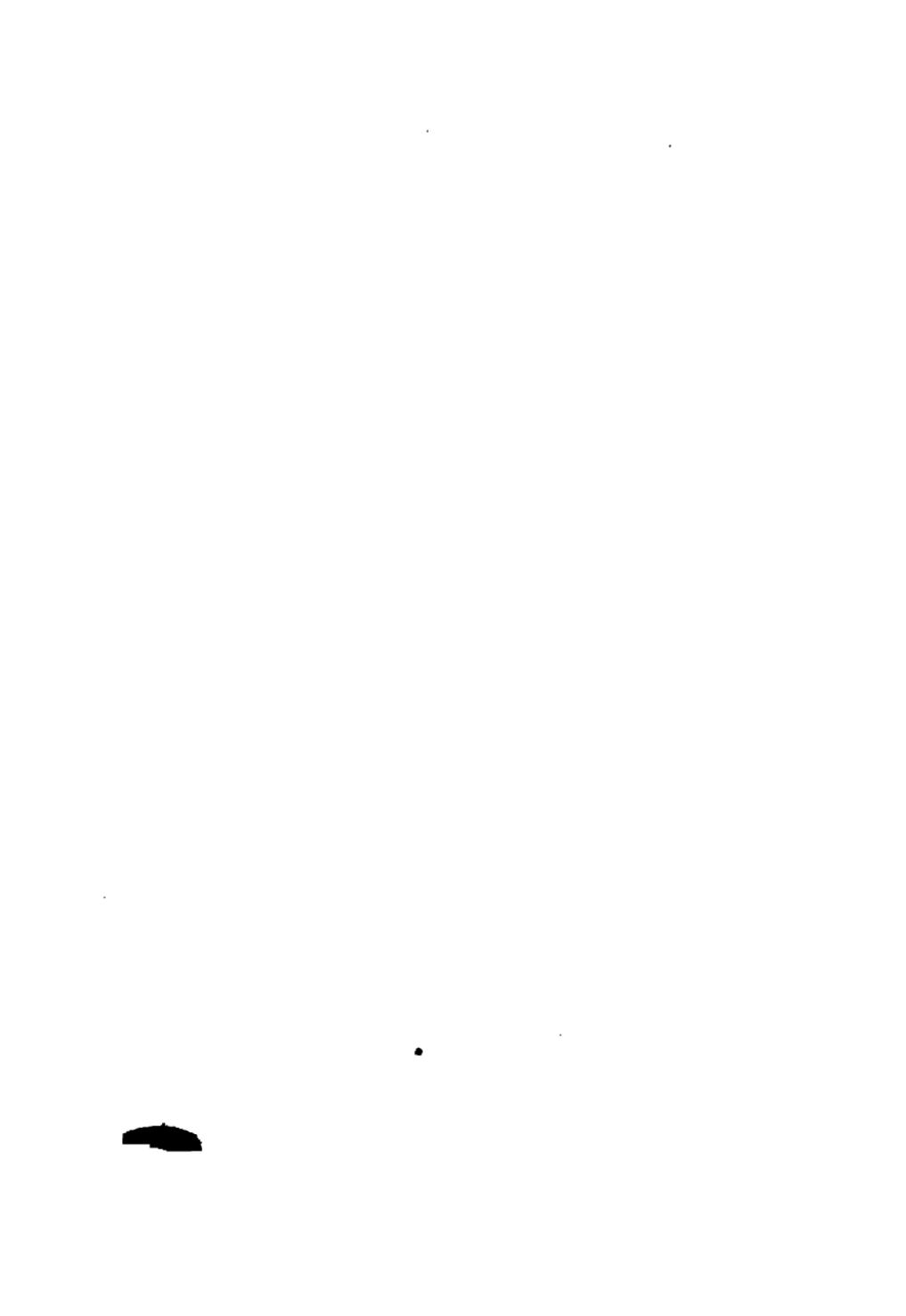
Years passed away, and the generation that knew Florence were almost all gone, when an old man, gray-headed, and bent with years, came to our village, and going with the sexton into the grave-yard, desired to be laid in the corner, shaded by the overhanging pear-tree. His death took place in a very few weeks, and his request was granted. He left no name or date, but only this inscription for his grave-stone, —

‘Wrath is cruel; but he that is slow to anger, is better  
Than the mighty.’

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\* Fact.

## THE VILLAGE.



## THE VILLAGE.

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### LETTER I.

' Ah happy hills ! ah pleasing shade !  
Ah fields beloved in vain !  
Where once my careless childhood stray'd,  
A stranger yet to pain !  
I feel the gales, that from you blow,  
A momentary bliss bestow.'

GRAY.

You request me, my dear friend, to give you a written account of that period in my early life which has interested you so much in the recital. It can only be from the contrast those early days present to your own elevated station in society, that scenes of remote retirement and humble obscurity can afford you interest. In looking back on them myself, they seem to have passed in another and earlier world. It has been beautifully said, that 'The actions and events of our

childhood lie like fair pictures in the air ; always in memory, they are objects of beauty, however base their origin and neighborhood.' In looking back, therefore, I am grateful that my early life was passed in remote obscurity, amid scenes of humble virtue, of peace and beauty.

You have seen, I think, W——, the distant village in New England, where I spent nearly the last half of the last century. Perhaps, however, you have merely looked at it as a passing traveller, and did not remark its simple beauty. To memory, every tree, every green pasture and humble dwelling, are as familiar as the room I sit in. It was distant about two miles from the ocean, and scattered on both sides of a small but tranquil and beautiful river, which was crossed by a wooden bridge, in the centre of the village. On the north side gentle hills rose gracefully from the river, and on the south extended level meadows, dotted with button-wood trees and weeping elms. The meeting-house and parsonage were on the north side, overlooking on the south the village, whose houses were scattered about the bridge, and ascended, at least the better sort, towards the church. Beyond the hills on the north, stretched out, as if to shelter us. the protecting forest. The meeting-house was

the square, barn-like structure, common at that period to all New England. Ours, however, was adorned with a steeple and belfry, and graced with a most sweet sounding bell.

You must remember my often-repeated descriptions of the dear old parsonage. It was a tolerably large, dark, unpainted house, two stories in front, full of windows, to admit all the genial influences of the south, while on the north it sloped down so that one might lay his hand on the roof. These old-fashioned houses are fast disappearing from our country. They were admirably calculated to protect us from the severe winters of our climate. The front always turned to the sun, and the long sloping roof, on which the deep snows rested, afforded, from that very circumstance, a protecting warmth. Almost the only picturesque object in our unpoetical country, the long well-pole, with its 'mossy, iron-bound bucket,' is disappearing with them.

Our house was rather irregular in form, and on the outside of a most venerable blackness, stained here and there with spots of moss and rust. We entered a sort of low, wide hall, which had been originally built of logs, by a low portal. A block of unhewn granite, worn smooth, and even hollow on the surface, by the

weary feet of many pilgrims, was the door-step. The rest of the house had been added at a later period. On the right of this low hall, a door led to my father's study, and on the opposite side to our little parlor. At the back part were the kitchen, dairy, etc. In the hall stood the spinning-wheels, and it was hung all around with skeins of linen and woollen yarn, and with other productions of rural and domestic labor. This humble dwelling was overshadowed by two giant sycamore trees, while its only ornament, the double white rose, grew profusely about its doors and windows.

I cannot but look back with gratitude to Heaven for the charm of solitude and beauty that environed my home. 'A piteous lot it were to flee from man and not rejoice in nature.' I loved, and I love still the glorious ocean, the gentle, quiet river, the sheltered valley, and the protecting forest of my native village.

My father, as you remember, was the pastor of this parish. It was a wide and scattered one, although the immediate village was small. The inhabitants of the village were poor; the richer portion of the parishioners living on distant farms. Owing to its proximity to the ocean, there was a great proportion of poor widows in the parish —

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the men probably going to sea, or on fishing voyages, where many of them perished.

It was long before any sectarians had invaded our parishes, and when the influence of the clergy was very great. Perhaps at that time they exercised a more extended and absolute power than should ever be granted to any class of men in a free country. Their counsel was asked and taken in all temporal as well as spiritual affairs, and they were looked up to with unbounded reverence. But never was this influence lodged in purer hands, and never exercised with more disinterested and beneficent effect, than in the case of my father.

The death of my mother happened about my fifteenth year, and left him a mourner with eight children, of which I was the eldest but one, and the youngest an infant of a day old. My mother's death was unexpected, although she had long been an invalid. It came upon us like a stunning blow. I never can forget the agony of my father. I had never seen a man weep, and there was something awful in his grief. I remember the day and night of her death, he walked the chamber in which she lay, pouring out his tears like a river. We poor children fled from him like frightened birds, or crept stealthily into the

room, afraid to remind him of ourselves, or of any thing else. But the next morning, which was Sunday, he had the infant brought to him, and calling us all into the room, and kneeling with us around the bed on which lay the cold, inanimate form of her he loved so fondly, he poured out his soul in a prayer that served to calm and console us all, and seemed to unite again the severed bond of love. After that he went to church, and preached as usual all day. I never, but once again, saw him weep, but I also scarcely ever saw him smile.

From that moment the care of the younger children, under his direction, devolved on my sister and myself. The influence he exercised over us all was gentle, but it was absolute and unbounded. It was the influence of religious principle and devoted tenderness. To oppose his mild authority was as little thought of, as it would have been to break through the wall of the house, when there was an open door to go out. Yet he was not unwisely indulgent. The extreme frugality of our manner of life allowed us few desires. Our remoteness from cities and all factitious pleasures limited so much our action, that there were few occasions that called for discipline. Our employments were of the sim-

plest and most natural kind. A walk on the beach to gather shells, or in the woods to gather berries, the care of birds and animals, the repeated study of our few books — these were our pleasures.

## LETTER II.

‘A man he was to all the country dear,  
And passing rich — with forty pounds a year.’

GOLDSMITH.

If ever the spirit of Christianity breathed in mortal form since that of its Divine Founder, my father’s was its chosen dwelling. The principle of duty, under the sanction of religion, was the great aim of his life. To this he subjected his fine imagination; and all the powers of a deep thinking and cultivated mind were brought to guard and preserve the sanctity of an enlightened conscience.

‘Much impress’d  
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,  
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds  
May feel it too. Affectionate in look,  
And tender in address, as well becomes  
A messenger of grace to guilty men.’

This celebrated description of Cowper’s does not express the purity, disinterestedness, and zeal with which he served his parish. It was his daily prayer that he might spend and be

spent in the cause of his Master. Never was prayer more completely answered. He had received the best education the country could then afford to young men ; his mind was stored with sound learning and elegant literature, his imagination was of the highest order, and yet he had no dearer ambition than to devote himself to his master's service in this obscure parish, among a humble, honest, simple people. He had, however, his joys.

' Solitude was not.  
We heard upon the wind the articulate voice  
Of God. He sat, and talked  
With winged messengers ; who daily brought  
To his small island — tidings of love and joy.'

I retain a vivid recollection of his appearance about the time of my mother's death. I think it was rather striking. He was not tall, but his form was entirely faultless. His complexion was pale, but not fair. A dark, quiet, penetrating eye occasionally beamed with the softest, most tender expression. Every feature was perfectly formed, and his smile revealed teeth of dazzling whiteness. His hair was black, thick, and clustering, with here and there a thread of silver. He was always dressed in black, with knee-

breeches and black silk stockings, and plain silver buckles in his shoes. The old-fashioned, three-cornered, cocked hat was at that time worn by all the clergy. After my mother's death, the care of his clothes devolved on me. I always ironed his shirts, plaited his fine cambric stocks, brought him his shoes and slippers, and performed all those little personal services which are so dear and precious when rendered to one we love. These, my dear friend, are trifles. But the sum of life is made up of small materials, and those trifles that make us happy, swell into the importance of great events.

His temperament was cheerful, but I think after my mother's death he lost the vivacity and gaiety which had been a marked trait in his character, and also all inclination for society, except that of his children. His manner towards us was that of gentle and affectionate playfulness; to others it was a courteous and manly simplicity. His habit was, to work in his garden, which he cultivated wholly with his own hands, in the morning, to visit and receive his parishioners in the afternoon, and to pass all his evenings in his study. About nine o'clock he came into the little parlor, where we were always collected around a little stand, with a single lamp



or candle, which dispensed light enough for the finest work for our young eyes. After chatting a little, our single servant was called in. My father possessed a most exquisite voice, and my elder sister sang well. They sang together one of those touching old tunes, 'Dundee's wild warbling measure, or plaintive Martyrs,' to the words of Watts, which I can never, even at this old age, hear without tears; a short prayer followed, and then with kisses and blessings he dismissed us to our pillows, to sweet dreams and early waking. The family devotion was the same in the morning, except that a short portion of the Scriptures was substituted for the hymn.

What an enviable fame is that of Watts! Equally a favorite with the child, and with the full of years; and cherished wherever devotional poetry is sought or valued. At the cottage fireside, where the timid voice lisps its evening hymn by its mother's knee; in the lonely church, where two or three are gathered together in the wilderness, or by the rushing stream, his poetry is heard. His hymns console the prisoner's solitary hours; they cheer the weary night of the wakeful invalid; they are whispered at the ear of sorrow; and are often the last sounds that are breathed from the lips of the dying. To

those who have been nurtured in the love of this sweetest songster in Israel, no other sacred poetry will ever appear half so affecting and devout.

There were, as I have said above, at this time, no sectarians and no visible division in the parishes, but there was not, of course, entire unanimity of sentiment among the clergy, any more than at present. My father differed from his brethren, although he was no bigot. He was, I think, what has been called a moderate Calvinist.

My father's preaching must have been singularly plain and direct. I remember he often brought Washington's example into the pulpit as a model for all the humble, common virtues, as well as for those which were peculiar to himself. It was the custom then for the clergy to preach upon all subjects of public interest. There were at this time neither reading-rooms, lyceums, nor even newspapers, in these remote parishes. The pulpit, therefore, was the organ of information to the people, and the clergy were expected to preach upon topics that would now be quite out of their province.

Our parish was wholly faithful to the principles of Washington. I remember the enthusiasm

that prevailed when his Farewell Address was read from the pulpit. My father wept at his death. It was the only one, except my mother's, that ever drew tears from him. The mourning, that was universal throughout the country, reached the little quiet corner where our parish was placed. Every man, woman, and child, put on black. What an eloquent tribute to the father of his country!

That my father thought every one had better travel the road to heaven in the vehicle that suited him best, I infer from many circumstances. A wounded French soldier passed a whole winter during the war, by our kitchen fire. He had lost both legs to the knee, and moved about on the stumps. We pitied him, and loved to hear his broken English, or rather a mixture of French and English. He was a Catholic, and wore a rosary with a crucifix. He always, however, attended our family prayers, crossing himself repeatedly during his devotions. My father took no notice of it, and never allowed the children to question him, or to smile at his ostentation of Catholic observance. All the French, who came to help us through the war, were probably Catholics, and our own people must then have embraced them as brothers. The

jealousy and hatred of Catholics is the growth of latter times. My father, although a Calvinist, reverenced this poor man's religion; and never, that I knew of, made any attempt to convert him. He probably thought, as we are all children of one Father, *he* drew as near in his ignorance to the character of a confiding child, as *we*, in our presumption of greater knowledge. This poor Frenchman made wooden spoons and forks, his only tool a sharp knife. He attained such perfection in spoons, that those made of our colored maples were really beautiful. If, according to a late definition, 'Religion is manifested in the pursuit of perfection in any direction *whatever*,' he was the most religious man among us, for his wooden spoons were as perfect as wooden spoons could be. Perhaps it would be better to adhere to the old definition — 'To do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.'

## LETTER III.

‘ Beautiful as sweet,  
And young as beautiful, and soft as young,  
And gay as soft, and innocent as gay,  
And happy, (if aught happy here,) as good ! ’

YOUNG.

You do not remember my elder sister. She died before I had the happiness of numbering you among my friends. Would you had known her ! She was a year or two older than myself, but in stature, in feeling, and in heart, we were twins, although she was distinguished from me by a rare loveliness of person and of character. I have always thought Miss Edgeworth must have known such an one, when she drew her charming little ‘ Simple Susan.’ She possessed the same unselfish traits ; the same conscientious devotedness to domestic love, and domestic duty. On her, principally, as the eldest daughter, devolved the care of the household, and the younger children.

I can see her now, bright and cheerful as the summer morning, with her spotless apron and

simple cap, going from room to room, and from closet to closet, to see that no dust and no stain remained, and then sitting down with her basket heaped, with work, cheerful, happy, ready for every service, and for every duty.

*‘Her life was like the violet sweet,  
As climbing jasmine pure.’*

It is true I aided her as much as I could, but I fear I never possessed the steadiness of character and disinterested self-devotion which distinguished her. The time and minds of both, indeed, were filled with care and labor; and when you know the extent of our family, you will not wonder that a long summer's day was too short for our work. It consisted of twin brothers, next to myself; then, a most lovely creature, my sister A—, five years younger than myself, and two very young children—the infant soon followed its mother, and was laid by her side, in the quiet, shady corner of the graveyard. That our lives were thus early filled with care is not remarkable. All the garments of the family were made and repaired by my sister and myself, with the single exception of a visit twice a year from a poor lame tailor, to fit my brothers' clothes. All the linen and cotton

for the use of the family were spun in the house. The weaving was done by the poor women of the village. I was fond of spinning on the little foot-wheel, although my father would never allow me to sit at it more than half an hour. He thought the employment unhealthy, and so it undoubtedly is, while spinning on the large wheel affords exercise to the whole body. I know not a more cheerful object than a young girl spinning at the large wheel. Notwithstanding the monotonous sound of her wheel, she always accompanies it with a lively song. But I forget, you never saw that old-fashioned inspirer of cheerfulness, the spinning-wheel. The soothing sound will never again be heard in our land. Our factories are thronged with the young women of the country. They can now purchase farms, and even husbands. Perhaps, indeed, they have more information, more cultivation, but are they as happy as the village maiden who sang all day long to the drowsy accompaniment of her spinning-wheel?

Fortunately at this time we had few books, for we had little time for reading. The few books we did possess were prized as books never were before. They were not only read,

they were studied, and got by heart. I have often thought, now that new books are heaped upon each other, till our library tables groan with the weight, of the value we attached to the old.

Perhaps our situation was favorable to the rapid development of the intellect. Enough was granted to keep the mind awake, and so much withheld, that the curiosity was always alive and the thirst for knowledge intense. Out of our own house we had absolutely no intellectual society, but we were not cut off from the 'still, sad music of humanity.' Human nature is much the same, whether dressed in homespun at the spinning-wheel, or in velvet at the harp. Now and then also a gifted individual would wander to our Patmos; and it is difficult for those, who are in the midst of all that is refined and intellectual in daily intercourse, to understand the intense delight with which we listened, and the care with which every chance word and every passing thought of genius were treasured, and remembered, and dwelt upon. It is true, these visits were like angels', 'few and far between,' but they seem now to me like those seeds wafted by the wind, and arrested by some obstacle in the desert, around which are

collected soil and verdure, till at length a beautiful oasis is formed, where there was before nothing but barren sand.

I remember well some instances of the value we attached to books. 'Cowper's Task' had been lent to us in an English edition. Of course we could not obtain it, and I copied the whole of it into a paper book. At a later day I also copied the 'Pleasures of Hope,' and the 'Pleasures of Memory.' 'Paradise Lost' was the only poem our library contained. That, with 'Pilgrim's Progress,' was our Sunday reading. My father's library consisted of Greek and Latin classics, sealed treasures to me, and old-fashioned theology which I never liked. That quaint old book, 'Mather's Magnalia,' was a great favorite, and Mrs. Rowe's 'Devout Meditations' I got by heart. I always took this last book with me when I went to the seaside. It is impossible for me to describe the deep melancholy that took possession of my mind at this early age, when the darkness of twilight and evening gathered over the ocean. The darkness seemed to come up from some mysterious region beyond, where thought was lost, and despair dwelt. I could not solve the mystery, for my temper was naturally cheerful. I do not wonder

that persons of a melancholy temperament have thrown themselves into the deep waters, seeking for oblivion from the influence of feelings I have myself experienced.

## LETTER IV.

‘Her duties walked their narrow round,  
Nor pause, nor interruption knew.’

I MUST not forget, in the enumeration of our family, our humble domestic friend and servant, Hannah. She was the most devoted, pains-taking creature, slaving from morning till night; never pausing nor resting while her hand found any thing to be done. I fear there are few such servants at this time. Our luxury has multiplied a very different class. With the increase of our riches, we have banished these humble friends from our firesides.

Hannah had been the nurse of my mother, and accompanied her purely from affection, on her marriage, to the obscure village where Providence had cast her lot, hiding, as she thought, her own and her mistress’s light under a most vulgar bushel. It was so, for she possessed many and most rare virtues. She had helped to bring us all into the world, had nursed our infancy, scolded and coaxed us,

taught us to walk and to speak ; her influence was, therefore, unbounded. Her devotion to my mother was unparalleled. After her death she steadily opposed herself to all change, to all innovation ; and (pardon me, adored shade of my mother !) to all improvement. I remember many amusing contests between my sister and Hannah on subjects of domestic economy. My sister's mild, but firm temper, generally prevailed over Hannah's deep-rooted habits. She would yield, however, with a bad grace, always repeating some of her time-honored proverbs. ' Young folks will be notional ; We can't expect old heads on young shoulders,' etc.

Before she came to my mother, she had lived with an English lady of some rank in Boston, and had inherited her old clothes. On week-days, she wore a skirt and short gown, her gray hair combed back over a high cushion, such as were worn in the days of Queen Anne, and with a low-crowned, wide-bordered cap, pinned on the top. But on Sundays she shone out in all her glory. She always went to church in the afternoon ; then she appeared in a yellow satin skirt, with flowers of various colors worked all over it, an open brocade gown with a train, short sleeves and black silk mitts.

A snow-white lawn handkerchief was pinned over her shoulders. Her cap gave place to a small black silk bonnet. A fan and high-heeled shoes completed her appearance. This, to be sure, formed a striking contrast to the homespun dresses of the larger part of the congregation. I believe they thought poor Hannah proud, as she sat in the front gallery fanning herself, and hated her; she repaid them, I am sure, with the utmost contempt.

Hannah was a most outrageous tory. She could not bear the name of Washington; and, that Lafayette, that good young nobleman, should come to mix up his fortunes with rebels, really wore upon her health. She was rather high church, also, in her religion. Under her pillow was always a prayer-book of the Church of England; although, out of respect to my father, she always went to meeting in the afternoon, and she never failed coming in to prayers; indeed, my father's deep and sincere piety must have convinced even her of the purity of his religion.

I believe I was past twenty before I emancipated myself from Hannah's control. I could not bear to wound the devoted affection and the time-honored prejudices of the faithful creature.

I remember an instance of her control over me. I had hitherto worn my hair in flowing curls over my shoulders, but as the fashion had changed, I wished to gather it with a comb to the back of my head, and my father, the last time he went to Boston, had bought me a comb for that purpose. But Hannah opposed herself most violently to the change. She said that only negroes wore their hair short, and that was because, poor creatures, God had given them nothing but wool. Beside, I was nothing but a child, (I was twenty,) and why should I try to look like a woman? I yielded to Hannah, and laid aside the comb, and this shows her absolute influence, that I should yield in a matter in which personal vanity was somewhat concerned. But she deserved that we should yield to her in some small matters, for she saved us from much care and labor,—she cooked and washed, made butter and cheese, soap and beer, and was always provided for our numerous guests.

I have often since wondered how my father could practise such extended hospitality. Perhaps the frugality of our usual manner of life furnished the means. We lived on the produce of our dairy and our garden; and the fowls and

lambs, of which we always had good store, were reserved for the honored guest. All the clergy came to our fireside as to a home. We had a little apartment, called the prophet's chamber, where a bed was always kept prepared ; and as there was neither bolt nor lock on either of our doors, they frequently arrived after the family had retired to rest. Providing shelter and food for their horses in the stable, and finding an unguarded way to the dairy, they afterwards went to the prophet's chamber, and the first we knew of our guest, was his appearance at breakfast the next morning. On days of prayer, ministers' meetings, and ordinations, our house was filled. Poor Hannah used to say, she could do very well with the ministers, but they brought so many alligators (meaning delegates) with them, that they ate all before them.

But to return to Hannah. After the death of my father, and the dispersion of our family, she married a man who must have sought her for the little money she had saved, for she was past sixty years old. He spent it, and they became extremely poor, together with a blind daughter of his ; and the little that I could do for her alone saved her from want and misery.

At her death, Hannah bequeathed to me the

few articles she possessed, that had belonged to my mother. During all her poverty and distress, she could never be induced to part with one of them. Poor Hannah! with all thy faults, I love thee still.

## LETTER V.

‘ Pointing with taper spire to heaven.’

I HAVE described the outside of the village meeting-house ; let me now introduce you to the interior, bare, desolate, and cold in winter. It was sunny and hot in summer, large, unpainted, full of windows, without blinds or curtains, and, with the exception of one pew, wholly unadorned. The pulpit was small, and rather low ; immediately beneath the pulpit was a large seat for the elders, as they were called. These consisted of two venerable old men, trembling and bent with age, with long silken white hair. They were stern and solemn, fearful objects to idle and playful children. In front of these sat the deacons, also two, and both old men. I remember the striking contrast presented by my father’s yet unchanged black, curling hair, to all these venerable gray-headed men. Just in front of the deacons were seats for the choir of singers, although they were afterwards removed to the front gallery.

It now seems to me there was an unusual proportion of old people in the church. Perhaps the common fallacy of the young made it appear so to me. There were often infants present with their mothers, not, as at an earlier period, because the fear of the Indians prevented them from being left at home without the guardian care of the father, but because the distance of their homes prevented the parents returning between the morning and evening service, and the babies could not be so long divided from the mother. The usual manner of coming to church was on horseback, the women behind their husbands or brothers. It was a pretty sight, on a sunny summer's morning, to see them emerging from the hills in twos and threes, while the pedestrians were crossing the meadows, and the children scattered about the church-yard in quiet, silent groups. The moment the bell ceased, the church seemed to swallow them up, and there was solitude and silence for the space of an hour, when they all again poured out, and the scene was again a gay one, for many of the old women, even in summer, wore the scarlet cloak, at that time so much the fashion.

There was one custom which I remember (and I fear it is one which has passed away with

the primitive manners of our forefathers) with particular pleasure. Many of the families of our parish lived too far from the church to return, during the short intermission, to their homes. They were always invited to pass that time at the house of the pastor. In the summer, a long table was spread, with bread, milk, and cheese, under the trees in the orchard, in the winter, by the kitchen fire. The summer repast was always delightful. We, children, waited upon them, poured out the milk for the old men, tended the infants, and, with this simple custom, Sunday was made a holiday for the indulgence of our best affections. I remember an old man who was always one of the guests. His hair was perfectly white, and he had lost an arm in the old French war. He had many stories to tell of the Indians and their cruelties, to listen to which, I did most seriously incline. He thought the war of the Revolution mere child's play, compared to the one in which he had been an actor. After the death of this old soldier, the Sunday parties lost much of their interest in my childish estimation.

There was one of the old men who might have sat for Scott's portrait of *Douce Davie Deans*. He was one of the elders, a severe and

bigoted Puritan. Travellers have been struck with the resemblance of the New England character, to that of the Scotch. To one who has lived in a New England village in the last century, when the population was more homogeneous than at the present day, the characters in Scott's novels must often seem like familiar friends. The Covenanter and the Puritan had also strong points of resemblance, as well as strong points of difference. The New England Puritans were mild in their legislation ; tender in their domestic relations ; lenient to all crimes, save one ; charitable to all sufferers ; faithful guardians to the brute creation. The Puritan thought himself the peculiar favorite of Heaven ; for him alone Christ had died. His faith was pure, his morals stern and severe ; he would not bow the knee to God, much less cringe to man. He valued human learning ; but the Scriptures, and especially the Old Testament, was the golden rule of his life and conversation. Puritanism, like the common air, was breathed in our village, and, as it has been said of another place, 'One might dwell there from year to year, and not see a drunkard, nor hear an oath, nor meet a beggar.'\*

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\* For an eloquent character of the Puritans of New England, see Bancroft's History of the United States.

Our Puritan elder differed much from my father in opinion, and was rarely satisfied with any of his sermons. During the intermission on Sundays, he sat apart, his attention fixed on a little pocket Bible ; never so intent, however, but he would observe and check the mirth of the children.

He, also, like Davie Deans, had a little Effie. She was a pretty little girl, his grand-daughter, and, as he used to call her, the last lamb of his flock. She did not, like poor Effie, meet with that indulgence which became her ruin. She was strictly watched. The old man kept her close at his side, learning her catechism, while the other children were searching for birds' nests and flowers. The demure little girl sat with eyes fixed on her book, and her thoughts on the birds' nests and the flowers, watching and longing to escape from her penance, and join the merry groups of children.

The old sexton was always one of the Sunday party. He was there to wait upon the guests, and receive his share of the repast. Next to my father, he was, I think, the most important person in the parish, at least in his own estimation. The pen of Scott would place him beside Adam Woodcock and Andrew Fairservice, as a worthy

pendant. As I first remember him, he was a little old man past sixty, with flowing gray hair, a limp in his gait, caused by one leg being considerably longer than the other. He had little sharp features, disfigured with snuff and tobacco, although his expression was singularly comical. He had a most knowing wink when he shifted his tobacco from one cheek to the other, and his good nature was imperturbable.

My father's old clothes always descended to him, even to the three-cornered hat ; and as my father was twice his size, and the clothes were worn without alteration, his appearance on Sundays was most grotesque, when the only varia-tions from a complete suit were gray yarn stockings, and a reddish wig, surmounting, not covering his gray locks.

As soon as the minister reached the steps of the meeting-house, he quitted the bell-rope, and, preceding him up the aisle to the door of the pulpit, he held it respectfully open till the clergyman was seated. With the old clothes and the cocked hat, he looked like a clever caricature of a well-dressed person.

He was one of those simple, idle, small-witted vagabonds, whom Providence seems to take special care of. It was his peculiar privilege to

prepare the common place of repose for young and old, for the babe of a day, and for the hoary head. But in so small a village, the travellers to their last homes were few and far between, so that the intervals of his time were spent in doing a turn here and there, fishing in the river, or sitting with a short, black pipe in his mouth, in our chimney corner. Late in life, when he was past sixty, he married a young girl, and had a large family of children. They lived in the smallest of all cottages, or rather huts, in a little nook close by the bridge. We often visited them, for his wife, strange as it may seem, was a frail and delicate creature, almost overwhelmed with a troop of white-headed, barefooted boys. Their cottage consisted of one room, and that not a large one. The furniture was a 'bed by night, a chest of drawers by day.' The poor young creature, to keep them from starving, toiled from morning till night, and almost always with a baby at her breast. Fortunately, he was paid a small sum as sexton, and the rest came from the neighbors. Poor, simple old man! He was living still, digging graves, and smoking, when I left the parish, and the last hand I grasped was the hard and horny one of the sexton.

## LETTER VI.

'Her cap, far whiter than the driven snow,  
Emblem right meet of decency does yield ;  
Her apron dyed in grain as blue, I trow,  
As is the harebell that adorns the field ;  
And in her hand, for sceptre, she does wield  
Two birchen sprays, with anxious fear entwined.'

SHENSTONE.

THE village dame, or school-mistress, claims a passing notice. Shenstone has described her as well as if she had been his familiar acquaintance. She dwelt in a little cottage close by the burying-ground ; her only neighbors, the quiet tenants of the graves. She was the sister of the former minister of our parish, and had kept the school for fifty years. She had seen her youth wither, her comeliness, if she ever had any, fade away, and had become gray, bent, and feeble, in this humble employment. Her gifts must have been originally small, for her pupils never passed beyond the mysteries of reading and spelling, knitting and sewing, or, at the last, the great achievement of a sampler. She was a hard-

featured woman, and equally hard, stern, and severe in character. How could it be otherwise? Exercising absolute power, as she did, for six hours in the day, over twenty or thirty wayward and impatient spirits; and never having felt the softening influence of those affections so necessary to every woman's heart; never having listened to the sweet sound of mother, from the rosy lips of lisping infancy, the exercise of absolute power had hardened and roughened her mind, as the constant use of the fingers, in bending stubborn and opposing substances, will harden and roughen the most fair and delicate hand. We held her in such absolute awe, that hardy indeed must have been the wight who could have braved her rod, or the still harder knuckles of her withered hand.

There sat, in that little apartment, the white-headed, bare-footed little rabble, demure as bishops, and quiet as frightened birds, looking timidly at the rod that hung near her right hand, or with longing eyes at the hour-glass that stood on a little shelf at her left, waiting with restrained impatience for the last sands to fall, and then to lift the bar from the door, and rush out with wild shouts of liberty and joy.

This was nearly the only school I ever entered, and this only for a short time.

' For never in the long and tedious track  
Of slavish grammar was I made to plop ;  
No tyranny of rules my patience rack'd ;  
I served no 'prenticehood to any rod.'

Nature was my school-mistress. The trees were my relations, the flowers my children. The birds were like fairies, coming and going. I know not whence, butterflies were winged messengers of joy, the winds were music to my ears, and the ocean, the deep and unfathomable ocean, was an all-pervading and infinite religion.

In the master of the district or grammar school, we possessed a teacher of a far higher order than our dame. He was a young man, in whose character we all felt the deepest interest, from his morbid sensibility and his singular misfortune. He belonged to one of the best families in the country, had received the highest honors of the University, was an elegant and accomplished scholar, and possessed that delicacy and tenderness of temperament, which attached his friends strongly and faithfully to him. Like most of the educated young men of the time, he was destined for the ministry, and was pursuing the preparatory studies in the family of a clergyman. His companion was a young man of his own age, his most intimate friend, one

who had been his chum in college, and they had lived together with an affection surpassing that of brothers.

One afternoon they were sitting in their study in the highest spirits. Our friend took up a pistol, and pointing playfully at his companion, said, 'Take care, I am going to shoot you.' The other laughed, and braved him to draw. Unhappily, the pistol was loaded with ball; it went off in his hand, and his friend was shot through the heart. He fell without uttering a word, and died with his eyes fixed on his friend, more expressive of anguish for him, than of sorrow for his own fate.

The poor man became frantic. He lost his reason for many months, and when he recovered, he literally 'never smiled again.' He covered his face with a handkerchief, like a veil, and never took it off. At least his face was never seen by mortal, till the hour of his death. He could not, of course, enter the ministry, but as he was a rare scholar, and knew the classics by heart, he taught our village school for many years.

Notwithstanding his melancholy, he was mild and gentle as a child. He never used birch enough in his school to make a broom, and did

not adopt that ingenious method suggested by the author of that admirable book, 'The Doctor,' that where one extremity was too dense and solid to admit a sufficient quantity of Latin and Greek, it should be made, by repeated applications of the rod, to interpenetrate the other.

He was the most absent of men. I remember once he had strayed out into the fields after dinner, and, like parson Adams, with his *Æschylus* in his pocket. The afternoon passed insensibly away, and he did not think of returning till the sun was setting. The boys had gone as usual to the school-house, and had had an afternoon of frolic. As he approached the scenes of his labors, he met all the boys sallying out, and called them back to begin their afternoon studies. And until they pointed to the setting sun, he could not understand that his *Æschylus* had stolen his time of duty from him.

He was a man of deep religious sensibility, and of most tender feelings. I remember, as one of the little children was playing with him, and trying to enlarge a little hole there was in his handkerchief, to see, as she said, the color of his eyes, we saw spots upon it as though tears were gushing out. We withdrew her from her sport, and my father forbade any further allusion

to the subject. Although his piety was deep and sincere, he would never take any part in the family devotion, except as a listener, and he always declined even to ask a blessing at the table, when my father was absent.

How deep must have been that wound — how intense the sensibility, that could never again meet the human eye! although the expression of every eye, to one so truly penitent, must have been that of love and compassion. To the eye of Heaven, who sees what mortals cannot penetrate, his meekness, humility, and self-abasement, must have gained their reward ; and after his short life was finished, he may have joined that early friend, where their union will be eternal.

## LETTER VII.

'Strange is it, that our bloods  
Of color, weight, and heat, poured all together,  
Would quite confound distinction — yet stand off  
In difference so mighty.'

SHAKSPEARE.

BEFORE the Revolution, we had in our parish a person of more consequence than any I have yet described — no less than an English Baronet. Sir W. S. lived about two miles from our church, on a beautiful little peninsula running out into the sea, and bounded on the side next the village by our beautiful river. The usual approach to it was by descending the river in a boat. The house, which to me was a palace, was built on the point, a level, wooded headland. It was protected on the side towards the ocean by noble trees, while sunny slopes descended quite to the margin of the river on the other side. Here, in solitary grandeur, lived the noble and childless pair. Lady S. seldom passed over her threshold, except to take an airing in her coach, and Sir W. S. suffered so much from ill health, that

he took no part in country affairs. Sometimes, but not constantly, his powdered head and gold-laced coat were seen in the only curtained and cushioned pew in the meeting-house. He was a Tory, but he was a very good friend to my father, and frequently invited him to be his guest.

I was once the companion of one of his visits. We went down the river in the boat, and landed at the foot of a beautiful avenue of noble trees. When we reached the hall door, I was surprised to see my father take out a handkerchief and carefully wipe every particle of dust from his shoes. Observing my look of wonder, he said, 'Lady S. was one of those exquisitely nice persons, who were offended by the soil of our mother earth.' This, of course, prepared me for something very imposing.

On entering the parlor I thought it untenanted, but presently I saw emerging from behind a large embroidery frame a delicate little woman, whom I could have taken in my arms, although I was but a child. She received us with great courtesy, but her appearance was a little grotesque. She had not changed the fashion of her garments since she came to this country, in the last year of the reign of George the First.

At this time she was about sixty years old ; her hair, which was quite gray and thickly powdered, was combed entirely back from the face, and hung down in ringlets ; and, except that the materials were finer, her cap was the exact pattern of our old Hannah's. She wore a white satin petticoat, with hoops, and an open brocade gown with short sleeves, and deep cuffs of Flanders lace. The lowness of her stature, I suppose, was the reason that the heels of her satin shoes were four inches high.

The room was exquisitely neat. The andirons, of which the tops were large, perpendicular brass plates, eighteen inches in diameter, were dazzlingly bright ; and the windows, thickly curtained, gave me an idea of such exquisite comfort as I had never seen before. Lady S. pressed us to stay to dinner, which my father declined, but when we walked out to take leave, we found some one had taken away our boat ; we were compelled, therefore, to stay for its return, or accept the courtesy of the carriage to take us two or three miles round and across the bridge to our village. My father preferred the former, and we accordingly remained to dinner.

Sir W. S. did not appear till dinner was announced. I remember the dinner as if it

were yesterday. Behind the chair of both master and mistress, stood a negro servant, both very old, with thin, woolly locks drawn out into a queue, and thickly powdered. They were dressed in black except their coats, which were of coarse, yellow cloth, covered with blue lace. The whole service of the table was of silver, while water and ale were drank from large silver tankards. The noble host and hostess seemed sad and peevish, and, notwithstanding their splendor, I remember thinking they were not so happy as my father and myself.

While we were at dinner, a gentleman, as I thought, came in to receive some order. He was dressed in white silk stockings and waist-coat, but with the same yellow coat, except that the materials were finer than that of the negroes. In my simplicity, I arose and dropped my little childish curtsy, at which my father first blushed, and then laughed. I found afterwards that he was the *maitre d'hôtel*. At length our boat returned, and we went home, my young mind filled with wonder at the splendor I had witnessed.

The baronet returned to England during the war, and bequeathed his library to my father. We had hitherto seen few books; now we pos-

sessed uncounted treasures. Dominie Sampson did not stand longer on the steps of the library, lost in a book, than I did while they were removed and arranged. Among them, was Rapin's History of England, in folio, with plates; Pope's Iliad and Odyssey; but with the exception of this, there was no poetry in the library.

We now began to read aloud in the long evenings, and oh! with what unworn delight we went through Pope's Homer, and all the Spectators, Tattlers, and Guardians. But the library contained, as I then thought, a treasure surpassing all these, and this was Sir Charles Grandison, and Clarissa, in ten or twelve octavo volumes. We had never read a novel. The world of fiction, except in the pages of John Bunyan, was to us an unknown country. My father objected to our reading Sir Charles Grandison. I believe he thought we should expect to find in after-life such patterns of manly perfection among the living, and suffer from the disappointment. I think he was mistaken. I do not believe I should have fallen in love with such a formal gentleman, even if he had been presented to me. I had even then imagined heroes much more attractive. We yielded to

his wishes, and the book was most reluctantly consigned to the upper shelves. There was no such objection to Clarissa Harlow, and the successive volumes 'smoothed the raven down of darkness till it smiled.'

It would be impossible to describe the effect this wonderful book had upon me. Clarissa, in my warmed imagination, was no longer a mortal. She was a beautiful spirit. She had made herself a home in my heart. She was now loved, lost, and mourned, like a well known, a cherished friend.

The taste of novel readers, improved as it has been by Miss Edgeworth and Sir Walter Scott, would now find the long, minute, heavy descriptions, introductory to the principal events, extremely tedious. At that time they were to me like the avenue to a grand and noble structure, where every undulation of the ground, every tree, every minute flower and shrub, increased the interest of the sublime termination. It has been considered as almost an insuperable objection to Clarissa, that many of the scenes are indelicate. True, they are. But the imagination of a young person must be already polluted, that could dwell upon such scenes, in connection with the divine Clarissa. In spite of

her heavy sorrows and terrible sufferings, there breathes around her the celestial purity of the **Madonnas of Raphael**. I have always thought, with Mrs. Grant of Laggan, that, out of the sacred volume, there is nothing half so affecting and sublime as the death-bed of Clarissa. Pardon this digression. I have wandered far from the subject with which I began, but, as I think, nearer to heaven.

It was strange that the baronet's library contained no copy of **Shakspeare**. Perhaps he took back with him to England this idol of his countrymen. I remember our first acquaintance with this favorite of nature. My father said it was the book to be studied next to the **Bible**. He gave us some money which we sent to Boston to purchase a copy of **Shakspeare**. The treasure came in eight small volumes. They are now before me, old, black, worn, and disfigured, but I would not exchange them for the most costly edition. Strange power of association! I can never read **Shakspeare** in any other edition. The words *seem* not the same. They do not bring back, with the forest of Ardennes, the still more secluded woods of Y. The sound of waves dying away on the beach is not in my ears, nor the gentle ripple of the

soft-flowing river. Lear, and Hamlet, and Juliet, and Rosalind, are alive only in these little, black, worn volumes, and associated with the humble garret, where, at dawn or at evening twilight, I lost all personal interests, in the sorrows of that poor old man, and when Shakespeare opened to me a world

‘Too rich for use, for earth too dear.’

## LETTER VIII.

‘Her eyes are wild, her head is bare,  
The sun has burnt her coal-black hair;  
She has a baby on her arm,  
Or else she were alone.’

WE had in our village an exact counterpart of this touching ballad of Wordsworth’s. She was a poor foolish young girl, half idiot, half insane, who had been cruelly wronged. She used to wander about with her baby in her arms; and long before I had ever heard of Wordsworth, she said to me, almost in his very words, ‘that the infant’s lips seemed to draw the fire from her brain, and the pain,’ laying her hand on her heart, ‘from here.’

‘Thy lips, I feel them, baby, they  
Draw from my heart the pain away.’

This was the reason, perhaps, that she nursed him till he was a grown boy. The child, also, was an idiot; though, unlike idiot children, he was never violent, and always perfectly harmless.

The mother and grandmother of these wretched beings was a poor, patient, uncomplaining sufferer. She lived in a little hovel, deep in the forest, to which the only entrance was through the untrodden paths of the greenwood. She supported herself and these two children, for the young mother was not twenty, by spinning flax and wool, with which she was furnished from our house. In the summer she gathered whortleberries, and in the autumn the fruit of the *myrica cerefera*, or bayberry, of which the beautiful green-colored and fragrant candles are made, that are often seen in the cottages of the country. The poor girl, after her child was born, could never settle to any employment. She wandered idly among the woods and hills, with her baby in her arms. Sometimes they would be gone several days and nights, and then the poor woman would come for my father to go and bring her back. Her mother had no control over her, but she was docile and obedient to my father, and indeed generally mild, except when any reproach was cast on her boy; then she was like the lioness in his defence.

This poor widow was one of many who supported themselves in the way I have mentioned, bringing their various articles to our house. We

never refused any thing ; paying them, as we were able, in small quantities of tea, sugar, meal, and other necessaries. My father seldom gave them money — indeed, money was almost as scarce with ourselves as with them.

A salary of five hundred dollars, which was seldom wholly paid, could not go very far beyond the necessaries of life, yet I never thought we were poor ; we had food and raiment, the luxury of domestic love, and of relieving the wants of those poorer than ourselves. What more could we wish ? In one respect my father was rich. He never owed a sixpence. Though at his death he did not leave a dollar, not a cent was charged against him.

In a few cases my father had given or paid his poor parishioners a silver dollar, and they never parted with the gift. Long after his death, the same dollar was in their possession. Their practice was to pledge it at the little shop in the village for necessaries, and when they had earned from other persons enough to make up its value they would redeem the dollar. When want urged, they would pledge it again, and thus, to their fond affections, it was the same piece of silver that had been the gift of their beloved friend. This was a humble anticipation of that useful modern institution, the Savings' Bank.



I remember one most affecting instance in which a poor woman was obliged to part with her dollar. It happened soon after the death of her friend. Her only son, a boy of fifteen, upon whom she depended for her support, had gone out in a little boat to fish. A sudden squall came on, and the poor boy was drowned. I never can forget the agonized screams of the mother, as she paced the beach that night! They almost silenced the wild roar of the breakers. At length I drew her home, and she passed the night at our fireside, in alternate faintings and hysterics. The body of the poor boy was washed on shore the next morning, and taken to his mother's cottage.

A new carpenter had come to the village, and when the coffin was brought home and to be paid for, he would take nothing but silver. He was a hard-hearted man, to whom she offered, in vain, her stores of yarn, and her bay tallow. When she could offer nothing else, she sat down and covered her head with her apron and sobbed aloud. I remember her saying, with a touching pathos, which showed the forgetfulness of sorrow, 'Ah, if Hal were here he would work for you, or fish for you, and soon pay the debt,' as if the poor boy could have paid for his own coffin. At

length the hoarded dollar was produced, and the man departed. How bitterly did I then regret that I had no money! If a hundredth part of what I have perhaps foolishly wasted since that day, could have allowed the poor woman to keep her dollar, I could not then afford to give it. She soon followed her poor boy to that narrow house which had cost her so much sorrow. As I was watching with her one night during her last illness, only a few hours before her death, she asked me to read a psalm. On opening the Bible, I found carefully wrapped in paper, and placed between the leaves, the very same dollar. I took it up in silence, and I remember it called tears to my eyes, but I could not at such a moment ask her how she had found means to redeem it.

## LETTER IX.

‘ We talked with open heart and tongue,  
Affectionate and true;  
A pair of friends, though I was young,  
And Matthew *ninety-two*.’

WORDSWORTH.

In sketching the characters of our village, I must not omit one who held an elevated station in the humble society, and a firm and affectionate place in our hearts. This was the widow of the former minister, at this time enjoying a green old age, and attaching to herself, by her yet charming qualities, the veneration and love of all who knew her.

It is a mistake to imagine, that, to retain one’s youth and vivacity, it is necessary to be a French woman, and to live in Paris. The qualities of youth belong neither to climate nor nation. The attributes that belong to immortality are those that keep us young. Thought, imagination, affection, self-devoting love, can never grow old. They are as youthful by the humble fireside of an American matron, as in the gay saloon of a

Parisian spirituelle. The fires of many an illumination have faded away, but the constellations are as young as on the day they were created.

When my father succeeded the former minister, and took possession of the parsonage, his widow removed to a little cottage at the foot of the hill. There, in the midst of her little vegetable garden, and surrounded by fragrance, which, as she was blind, she coveted rather than beauty, she lived to the great age of ninety years. But there was nothing visible of the usual decay of this winter of life. She presented a perfect picture of beautiful old age. Her hair, white as snow, and silky as an infant's, was combed back from an almost unwrinkled forehead, and shaded by a lawn cap, exquisitely plaited, and rivalling only the hair in whiteness. Indeed, she preserved, at this great age, much of the beauty for which she had been so remarkable in her youth. On looking closely at her dark blue eye, which had lost none of its brilliancy, one felt that the expression of a benign old age was wanting. She was blind. Her husband had been a great reader of Greek and Hebrew. He loved to hear his favorite languages from the low, sweet voice of his wife; and she, like Milton's daughters, read the words without understanding the sense, till her poor eyes were the sacrifice.

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Her mind was stored with curious facts, and her anecdotes of earlier times in New England were inexhaustible. She was born in the vicinity of Boston, and was well acquainted with all the eminent men, her contemporaries. She had anecdotes of Governor Shirley and his young French wife, and kept up a correspondence, nearly to the close of her life, with some of the ministers in Boston.

Her life must have been marked by many sorrows. From her window she looked upon the graves of seven children. She lamented, when she became blind, that she could no longer see the place of their repose. Of double the number of grandchildren, she had outlived all but one fair girl, the staff of her old age. Bereaved as she had been, in her presence one breathed only the transparent atmosphere of cheerful resignation and content. In looking back upon almost a century, she seemed to have erected, at every resting-place, only monuments of the goodness of God, and to look on her afflictions as the passing cloud.

The child who lived with her was the youngest daughter of her favorite son. She was a fair, delicate girl, of sixteen. I scarcely ever saw a more lovely young creature. If it be true,

as travellers have said, that our young country-women surpass those of Europe in delicate and feminine beauty, Grace would have been distinguished even among the fairest. But they pay dearly for this distinction. The delicacy of their appearance bears fearful testimony to the frailty of their constitutions.

Perhaps there is no class of females, beneath the highest, who endure so little labor and fatigue, and yet their early worn and faded appearance, and the small number of old women seen among them, is a certain indication that something must be wrong. I am sensible the reason we see so few old persons, is to be attributed, in some degree, to the comparative thinness of our population. Besides, in Europe the habits of the people are out-of-door habits. In the southern part of Europe, every old woman goes out to enjoy the warmth of the noon-day, and quicken her creeping blood in the beams of the sun. In Catholic countries, gathered about the steps of the convents, are only the old, infirm, and decrepid; and when I have seen them receiving their soup and broken bread at the wicket, I have often asked, Where are the young and the healthy? Our old women hide themselves from the 'gairish eye of day;' they bury

themselves in comfortable arm-chairs, in the chimney-corner, or creep into the most retired nook in their bed-rooms.

To return from this digression, upon the small number of my contemporaries to their queen, my poor friend of ninety years, and her lovely grandchild. They presented one of those beautiful adaptations of Providence often existing, but seldom observed, where those little daily and hourly attentions of active youth, in this case rendered doubly important by the blindness of the old, are repaid by the affectionate counsel, the gathered wisdom, and the protecting love of age. To use a common simile, Grace was the beautiful vine, sheltering and ornamenting the broken tree that gave *her* strength and support.

Connected with this fair girl was a story of true love, which interested me deeply at the time of life when all love bears the character of romance. As half a century has since passed, and the grave has closed over all concerned, and buried alike their faults and their sorrows, I may be permitted, if your indulgence will pardon me, to give you a sketch of it without wounding the memory of any. But this requires another letter.

## LETTER X.

‘Alas ! her gentle nature was not made  
To buffet with adversity.’

I HAVE already mentioned the extreme delicacy of the appearance of Grace. This she inherited from her grandmother’s family, who had nearly all died of consumption. It was increased, no doubt, by her constant attendance on a person so aged. Extreme youth and extreme old age should not dwell much together. The warm, close air requisite to the comfort of age, is poison to youth. Youth, with its bounding blood and gay spirits, longs for the free, bracing air, which would congeal to ice the creeping blood of age. Circumstances, therefore, prepared the way for the early decline of this young girl.

Rosalind says, ‘Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but never for love.’ Shakspeare knew the human heart too well to say that *woman* never died for love. Many, many are the women who have shrunk away into solitude, to hide the disappointment

of long cherished hopes, to tent the wound, or to draw out the barbed arrow of heartless desertion, and have died in the struggle. It is too common an occurrence, almost too trite a remark to venture upon. I acknowledge there is usually some predisposing cause, some weakness of constitution that insidiously aids the enemy; but where this is not the case, the robust and strong may suffer only a heart-break, and 'brokenly live on.'

Among the widows of our parish, there was one much superior in manners and education to the society in which she lived. I do not remember the early history of Mrs. R—, but I believe she had removed to our village, on the death of her husband, from one of the southern cities. She had an only child, a son, to whom she was devoted with all that exclusive fondness so common under such circumstances. He was worthy of his mother's love, and repaid it with thoughtful steadiness, devotion to his studies, and tender attachment to her. He was educated at Cambridge, and had just left the University when the war of Independence commenced. Like other ardent young men, he resolved to devote himself to the service of the country. I remember he was much urged not to enter the army,

but he shared the enthusiasm of the time, and marched off with several other young men of the parish. Perhaps it is not remembered that Washington was in the habit of writing to the clergymen of the different parishes, and stating, with simple eloquence, the wants of the army. My father received several such letters. I have them now. I would not exchange them for their weight in diamonds. After receiving one of them, he used to preach a sermon on the duty of patriotism, describing the destitution, but the patriotic energy of the army, and the perplexity of its beloved commander. The next day half a dozen young fellows would march off to aid the defenders of the country, serve a season, and then come home again to the plough and the fireside.

To return — I should have said before, that in the family of Mrs. R—— had been brought up from her infancy a niece of about the same age with her son, who had been treated in all respects like a daughter. Alice was a pretty girl, fresh and fair as a rose; engaging in her manners, which partook a little of the gaiety and buoyancy of her spirits. She was sometimes called the prettiest girl in the parish, and might have passed for such, where pretty girls were much

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more plenty. As these two young people had been much together, an attachment had grown up between them ; on the part of Henry R—— it was that of habit, and what Miss Edgeworth would call propinquity ; but with Alice it was of the deepest tenderness. He was not aware of its depth or character ; and when he parted to join the army, although her tears and depression might have betrayed her to a man of more vanity and self-love, Henry thought it was only the common sensibility of woman.

R—— entered the army as an ensign ; he studied the profession with diligence, devoted himself with ardor to the cause, and soon rose to the rank of captain. He had been in the southern division of the army about three years, had seen much severe service, when his health, owing to the climate and great fatigue, became injured, and he obtained leave to come home and repair his exhausted strength. I remember the joy of his return ; his mother and cousin saw, with inexpressible pride and joy, the improvement in his person and manners. He had been a timid, bashful youth ; he was now a self-possessed, though modest young man. A military air, and the severe duties of his profession, had given a manliness and dignity to his appearance,

which commanded respect as well as love. We were all charmed with our hero, and innumerable little amusements were planned by the three families to do him honor.

During the three years of his absence, our little Grace had grown from a pale, sickly-looking child, to a delicate, lovely young woman. I have often observed this change to take place in children of weak constitution. They seem like those rare plants born to bloom but once, and then wither away. She was now scarcely sixteen, fair as a lily. Her eyes were a dark hazel, and her silken hair of the palest auburn. Blue veins wandered over her fair temples and snowy throat, while every passing emotion brought a faint color to her usually pale cheek —

‘Like day’s last blush reflected from a field of snow.’

She was exactly the character to captivate a soldier. Timid, modest, self-distrustful, she was like a tender flower, to be cherished in the bosom, and shielded from even the winds of heaven. Oh! it is dear to the pride of man to protect, to support the clinging flower.

‘The plant that they tend is the plant that they love.’

The evening previous to Captain R——'s return to the army, I was sitting with our venerable old friend when the three young people came in. Grace and Captain R—— were soon after conversing apart in a very low voice, when, with the usual acute sensibility to sound that characterizes the blind, she observed how much the tones of their voices were alike. I had not observed it, but now they both started and blushed deeply. The truth flashed on my mind,— and, as Alice afterwards told me, it did at the same moment on hers, and seemed like the point of an arrow to pierce her heart.

The young people went home with me, as Captain R—— wished to take leave of my father, as he was the next day to return to the army, to which he had been suddenly recalled. As they stood at the door, Alice said, 'You shall have something to remind you of this last evening,' and ran to the garden to gather him some roses. He seized the opportunity to take Grace's hand. They both stood in the deepest embarrassment. 'I thought,' said he, 'to have spoken to you, I thought to have told you how dear beyond all price is this little hand, but I cannot, I must write; you will not refuse to read.' Grace trembled, and the faint color in

her cheek had deepened to crimson. At this moment Alice appeared from the garden with her hand full of roses. He raised the hand of Grace to his lips. Alice saw it. She became deadly pale, and trembled so much that she was obliged to take the arm of her cousin as she walked home.

So far I was a witness of this little romance. The particulars that follow were told to me by Alice long afterwards, when she was laid on that sick bed from which she thought she should never rise again.

They reached their home without a word having been spoken by either. Alice had forgotten the roses; they hung unconsciously in her hand. She gained her own room, bolted the door, threw herself into a chair, and burst into that agony of bitter tears that woman sheds but once. Yes, the tears that flow for the first disappointment of the affections surpass in bitterness all others. These are not the holy drops that in after-life purify the source of tears. A mother's grief flows from a deeper, a purer fountain. These are made up of mortification, pride, humiliation, and anger, and as they mingle with the softer streams, they desolate and indurate the heart. Remorse alone

can add to their exceeding bitterness,—the grace of God only can make them the means of purifying the character.

At length she became more calm. The fabric of her hopes lay shattered in the dust; but who had raised this fair fabric, and who had dashed it to the ground? In looking back on all the passages of their intercourse, Alice could not fix on a single word or look of R——'s, that had evinced more than the affectionate interest of a brother or a cousin. She repeated many things he had said, vainly trying to imagine the *tone* more tender than the words. In walking, did he not always offer *her* his arm, while Grace walked on the other side? Did he not always chat and laugh with *her*, stealing only a timid glance under Grace's bonnet. She now recollects that he had asked her a thousand questions about Grace, and seemed to delight to dwell on every trifle relating to her character, her occupations, and habits. Her pillow that night was steeped in tears. A change came over the spirit of her dream. She found that she had herself created the beautiful phantom that had now melted away into thin air. The first twittering of the early birds found her still awake. Oh, how painful to

those who have passed a night of sleepless sorrow is the first faint sound of the happy, waking birds? It comes before the dawn, and brings the thought of the early, dewy morning, the gradually unfolding light, the leaves stirred by the summer wind, and at length the rising of the glorious day. All this came over Alice, contrasted with her own misery, and she buried her head in the bed-clothes, vainly hoping to shut out the agony of her own spirit.

At length she arose, and after collecting her thoughts as much as possible, she descended to the parlor. Captain R—— was already gone, and his mother had accompanied him to the nearest seaport, where he was to embark and join the army at the South. She was glad to be alone, but her agitation the night before had prevented her from learning this arrangement. On the table was a note addressed to herself, inclosing a letter for Grace. It expressed in warm terms his admiration of Grace, entreated his cousin to become his advocate with her friend, and to ascertain a point the dearest on earth to his happiness, which his sudden recall had prevented him from securing. Alice thought it was what she had expected; but hope had lingered still, and she was unprepared

for such a blow. Her eye took in the meaning of the note, the certainty of the death of her hopes came over her, the letter fell from her hand, and she sank down in a state of insensibility. When consciousness returned, the letter and note lay at her feet. She shut her eyes, to banish the sense of misery. But in vain, — Grace would probably soon call, and she must prepare to meet her with firmness.

Happy would it have been for Alice, if at this moment she had known the love of a mother or of a faithful friend. She was assailed by strong temptation, she should have flown to God ; and in that communion she would have found herself strengthened and protected. Instead of humbly praying, ‘Lead me not into temptation,’ she began to reason. Her principles, weaker than her reason, were written on the sand, and soon effaced by the waves of passion. Grace, thought she, cannot feel as I do. Henry is to her only the acquaintance of a day, while to me he has been the cherished companion of my life. They are ignorant of my love for him. If they knew it, would they oppose a transient feeling to the happiness of my whole future life ? But she does not love him. I have never seen the smallest sign of love. If she did love,

she is so confiding, would she not have told me all? Henry fancies she loves him, because she is so gentle, so tender, that she loves every living thing; even the birds do not fly from her. To her he has never spoken of love. And then, though she did not use the words of the poet of nature, the same thought was in her mind —

‘He that is robbed, not knowing what he has lost,  
Let him not know it, and he’s not robbed at all.’

How dangerous to admit false premises in reasoning! It is even more dangerous than *one* false step in morals. A false step can be retraced and the true path found; but to take the wrong direction, and persist in following it, flattering ourselves that it will at last come out right, can lead us only to shame and misery.

She took up the letter. It was sealed with the emblem of hope. Was there, then, hope for all but her? What if this letter had been intrusted to a faithless messenger? What if the letter should never reach Grace? All would be as it was before. Grace would be unconscious of any loss. She would not in fact suffer any loss. The thought had taken possession of her mind; she could not banish it. She threw the

letter from her, and read again her own note. It was almost tender. What would be the effect on Henry did he believe that Grace was cold to his suit, and returned no answer to his letter? Oh, he would come back to her, and she would repay him with a whole life of devoted tenderness for this little deception. She took up the letter again. She heard a footstep,—it might be Grace. She could not meet her now,—she crushed the letter and the note together in her hand, and then threw them behind the fire!

The footstep passed on—it was not Grace—a mist seemed to come before the eyes of Alice, and the room was suddenly dark. She pressed both hands on her forehead, and remained long without motion or consciousness. At last she walked slowly to the window and threw up the sash. She felt as if there were an eclipse. The sun appeared to be darkened, the whole face of nature changed. She smelt the damask rose that grew near the window. The fragrance appeared to be gone. It was not what it used to be. She turned away, and thought she was walking in a dream. She tried to awaken herself. Alas! She could not bring back her former self. Her innocence was gone.

## LETTER XI.

*‘Cette vie n'a quelque prix que si elle sert à l'éducation religieuse de notre cœur.’ — MADAME DE STAEL.*

PERHAPS you will think it strange, my dear friend, that Captain R—— should have left his fate undecided to the very last evening of his visit, and then have departed without the certainty of securing his happiness. But he had never been a despairing lover. Grace was too artless, too simple-hearted, to conceal the delight his attentions gave her. He felt certain he possessed the treasure of her love, and like a miser, he wished to dwell on it in secret, to be conscious of his happiness without imparting the enjoyment. He loved to see the timid blush steal into the cheek of Grace when he approached her, to see her eyes fill with tears when he told of the dangers he had escaped, and those he must meet again, and to mark the sudden paleness of her cheek when he talked of soon joining the army and fronting them again.

To Grace within the last two months had

been comprised the happiness of years ; indeed, until now she thought she had never lived. She had changed in one short week from a timid, reserved child, to a thinking, reflecting woman. She had been before a beautiful statue ; the fire stolen from heaven had touched her, and she was now a loving, confiding woman. The evening, therefore, that he had whispered his love, and promised to write to her, had only realized her dream of joy, and given her the 'sober certainty of waking bliss.' She ran down the short path that divided her home from ours, with so light a heart, so quick a step, that even her blind grandmother penetrated her secret, and drew from her a timid confession of her happiness. That night, she, too, was sleepless, but it was from agitation and joy. She was humble and self-distrustful. She was unconscious of her own personal charms, and like Miranda, she could have wept at her own unworthiness. Her impulses were all from heaven and nature, she knew nothing of the conventions of the world and its vanities, and that Captain R—— should make her the partner of his heart and his fortunes was almost too much happiness to bear. Her cup was full, — with fervent, simple gratitude, she poured out her thanks to God —

‘Till like a shutting flower her senses close,  
And on her lies the beauty of repose.’

A womanly feeling prevented Grace from going the next day to see Alice. She remained at home, expecting the promised letter. When the day had passed, and it did not come, she thought she should certainly hear when his mother came from Boston. Travelling, at that time, was slow and uncertain; she waited, therefore, many days, with ‘that hope deferred which maketh the heart sick.’ As soon as she heard of Mrs. R——’s return, she flew to the house, and blushing ‘rosy red,’ asked for her letter. ‘I brought no letters from Boston,’ was Mrs. R——’s quiet reply. The eye of Grace penetrated every part of the room where a letter could be placed, and as soon as she was alone with Alice, she held out her hand, saying, ‘Do not trifle with me,—do not tease me,—give me the letter?’ ‘I have no letter,’ said Alice, faintly, and without looking up,—‘at least, none for you. Henry wrote a few lines to me, but there was no *note* for you.’ Grace did not speak again. There was an embarrassed silence. Oh, thought Alice, she does not love him; if she did, she would not take it so quietly. If she had not herself been blinded by her own

selfish passion, she would have seen that Grace was deadly pale, and that as she moved towards the door, her limbs could scarcely support her. She would have felt that at that moment she had most assuredly dealt her a death-blow; that in consequence of her cruel treachery, the life of Grace would as surely be the sacrifice, as she had seen the fatal letter pass quickly to ashes.

Grace walked slowly home. It was the beginning of June, when the New England spring has attained its utmost beauty. To her, the trees, the flowers, the skies seemed suddenly clothed in mourning. Her dream of happiness had vanished. The beautiful gourd, under whose shadow she had hoped to dwell, had grown up in a night, but it had withered in the morning. She knew that her little world had changed forever, that her sun had gone down, and that the beautiful hues of hope had faded, and the night had settled down with 'darkness that might be felt.' It is a mistake to suppose that gentle and timid characters are incapable of receiving a lasting impression. The wax, that melts the most readily, takes most perfectly the impression of the seal. The diamond, the hardest substance in nature, has

existed before in the delicate essence that gives color to the flowers.

When Grace reached home, the quick ear of her grandmother detected the change in her footstep. She had asked and Grace had answered some trivial question, when she called her to her, and folding her in her aged arms, 'I trusted,' said she, 'that God would have taken me to himself before I had heard that tone of anguish in your voice.' She felt that her cup, which had been filling for almost a century, could contain yet one more drop of bitterness.

But why, you will ask, did not Captain R—— inquire after the fate of a letter so important to his happiness? He was immediately engaged in the most active and busy scenes of the war; the communication of letters was at that time also so uncertain, that although he wrote several times, his letters did not reach their destination. Like most young men who have only a superficial knowledge of women, he concluded, when he received no answer to his letter, that Grace was one of those frivolous young women who do not know their own minds,—that she was pleased with his attention when he was present, but that some other fancy

occupied her as soon as he was away. He knew not, he saw not, that her cheek became every day thinner; that the beauty of her eye was faded; and that the weary, heavy step that carried her every post-day to the office to inquire for letters, became at length so feeble that she could no longer cross the threshold. This change did not come on suddenly; it was imperceptible, except to those who rarely saw her; and, even when she became alarmingly ill, as the guilty secret was confined to the breast of Alice, it was thought to be only the usual progress of that insidious disease which had carried off all her family.

More than a year had passed, when Mrs. R—— was informed, by an express, that her son was severely wounded, and was coming home to be nursed and to recover his health. He remained at home two or three months. During this time, Alice was his constant companion and his mother's most efficient aid in nursing. She read to him, talked to him, and helped him to bear with patience the long, weary hours of convalescence. As it was in the middle of winter, and Grace was a close prisoner to the house, she, probably, was scarcely mentioned in his presence. His pride

had been wounded by her fancied coldness, and he had, himself, lost much in the esteem of our village by what was supposed his neglect of this, its fairest flower. The subject was, of course, avoided by the few persons who saw him, and he remained ignorant of the ruin he had undesignedly wrought. It was not strange that a grateful attachment to his devoted nurse should soon take the place, in his heart, of one which he thought unrequited; that he should see a thousand charms before invisible; and that, as the hour of separation drew near, he should entreat, that, at the close of the war, she would unite her fate with his, never again to be divided.

Was Alice happy when the object for which she had sacrificed principle, conscience, friendship, and almost heaven, was attained? We saw her very little, but when we did meet, there was a strange excitement in her manner. Her eye was restless, she could not meet a steady gaze. She withdrew herself from all confidential intercourse. Her spirits were flighty, rather than cheerful, and her whole heart dwelling on the termination of the war, to which event, indeed, the wish and prayer of every heart was directed. She rarely visited

Grace. She could not bear the sight of the ruin her treachery had wrought.

I passed much time with my poor old friend during this dreary winter, and was sitting by the couch of Grace when she was told of the approaching marriage of Captain R—— with Alice. A faint smile passed over her faded countenance. She did not speak, but two burning tears coursed down her cheeks, and from that hour she was evidently worse.

Before her death, deep religious affections had taken the place in her heart of earthly passion. But this had been the work of time. It is not when the heart is crushed with such a blow as hers, that it can turn readily to God. We forget that God works by second causes, and the affliction seems to come, not from his wisdom, but from the injustice of man, and the word, Duty, has lost its meaning. But when time has taken away the sense of injury, religion combines with its gentle influences to open all the heavenward affections ; and in the heart that has been mellowed and quickened by earthly love the seed is sown, that, nurtured and refreshed by spiritual influences, bears the blessed fruit of a holy, heavenly love.

But the day of retribution was at hand, and

it came like a flash of lightning from a summer sky. Captain R—— had been one of the most exemplary young officers in the army. He was with that detachment, led by Lafayette, which suffered so much for want of clothes, and were supplied by the generosity of the noble Frenchman. He had been promoted to the rank of Colonel, and was a favorite with Washington. All his wishes had been attained, when, in the very moment of victory, at the siege of Yorktown, he fell, mortally wounded.

When the news of his death reached our village, by a letter from Washington's own hand to his mother, the exultation for the victory was changed into mourning for his loss. My father, who thought first of his poor mother, was just leaving home to visit her, when a messenger came entreating him to hasten, for they feared Alice was dying. When we arrived at the house, the mother's sorrow was forgotten, in the more intense affliction of her who had always been to her like a second child.

We found Alice stretched on the bed, apparently without life or motion. Her hair was damp and matted around her face, her lips and cheeks perfectly colorless, except a circle of deep crimson around the eyelids. One hand

was laid on the wrist of the other. She was apparently counting the pulses, wishing and hoping that death would come and relieve her from her agony. Alas! she was young and full of strength. Death will not come at our call. Many long days, many long years must she suffer, before sorrow can tame that bounding pulse, or chill that beating heart.

My father sat down by the bedside and took her hand in his. She did not raise her eyes, but appeared unconscious of his presence. He then whispered softly to her, — ‘ Turn to God and he will turn to thee.’ She took no notice, her eyes remained fixed, though she apparently saw nothing. At length he said, ‘ Jesus came to bind up the broken heart, to speak peace to the troubled conscience.’ She sighed, and her lips moved as though she would have said, ‘ My case is beyond his reach.’ After a pause, my father whispered again, ‘ Much has been forgiven her, for she has loved much.’ He had touched the right cord, the blood rushed to her lips and cheeks, her breast heaved, and she burst into tears. She wept long with unrestrained emotion. No word was spoken as we sat in that chamber of sorrow, the mother now almost as much an object of sympathy as the

daughter. At length Alice suffered herself to be undressed and put to bed. I sat by her all night. She had many returns of her agony, when, no doubt, her severest suffering was from the remembrance of the deep injury she had inflicted on poor Grace.

Her illness lasted many weeks, and her recovery was slow and doubtful. But when she rose from that bed of sorrow and penitence, she was an altered creature. Her gaiety was gone forever,—but her character had taken a tone of self-denying virtue, that atoned, if any thing could atone, for her former sin. Upon the death of Grace, which took place a few months after we had heard of that of Colonel R—, she devoted herself to the poor bereaved grandmother, who had now become entirely helpless. Her attentions soothed the last hours, and supported the aged Christian as she descended to the welcome of the waiting grave. Afterwards, she paid all the duties of an only child to her adopted mother, and cheered the sad evening of her declining life.

The particulars I have now made known were related to me by Alice during her illness. When I asked my father how he could adapt his conversation, at the time of her illness, so

exactly to her case, he said he had long thought she was suffering from pain connected with a wounded conscience, though he knew nothing of the circumstances. This had escaped me, inexperienced as I was, at that time, in human sorrows.

## LETTER XII.

‘ We still have slept together ;  
Rose at an instant, learn’d, play’d, eat together ;  
And wheresoe’er we went, like Juno’s swans,  
Still we went coupled, and inseparable.’

SHAKSPEARE.

THERE were some relatives of my mother’s in Boston, who had frequently invited their ‘country cousins’ to visit them. As they urged their request with great apparent sincerity, my father at last consented to spare my sister for a few months in the winter of 178-. We were exactly of a size, and as we knew nothing of *meum* and *teum*, there could be culled from our limited wardrobes articles enough to allow my sister to make a respectable, though I fear a terribly old-fashioned appearance in the capital. She wrote to us often during her absence. A large bundle of her letters are now before me, which for half a century have remained untouched. Who can bear to read old letters ; the records of the cold, the faithless, and the dead ? Even the outsides, yellow and discolored

as they are, excite a thousand thronging, overpowering recollections. Here is one on which my little sister drew a pattern for needle-work, as we sat around our little table in our happy parlor,—another, upon which the same ready pencil has sketched a caricature of a visiter who was not a favorite. A third, upon which my dear father drew the path, to direct us to a certain spot in the forest, where we could find the yellow cypripedium ; and here are others with names upon them, which the winters of seventy years have not been able to efface from my heart.

The first of my sister's letters gives a sketch of Boston in the latter part of the last century, and I will give it to you without omission.

'Dear —— : After I parted with you all, that cold morning, my journey was rather melancholy. I could not help feeling, that perhaps I ought not to have left all my domestic cares to you, and that I should be missed, even more than you imagined. At the end of the second day we arrived in Boston. Mrs. —— received me most kindly, and inquired much for our dear father. I was very weary, and soon retired to bed. The next morning I arose at my usual

hour and went down. The servant was just kindling a fire in the parlor, and as he told me breakfast would not be ready for two hours, I was obliged to go back to my room and cover myself with the bed-clothes, thinking of the cheerful faces around the breakfast table in our comfortable little parlor at home.

'After the quiet of so many years, Boston is to me a very confused and noisy place. Last night I went to a ball at —— house. I was much afraid my appearance would be very old-fashioned, for you know our *company* dress was made out of our mother's wedding gown. I dressed myself, however, as neatly as possible, with the fine lawn handkerchief which is trimmed with Mecklin lace on my neck, but I was much surprised to see all the ladies with bare shoulders, and dresses of a very different fashion. I believe my appearance excited some ridicule, for I saw a smile on many faces. The master of the house immediately approached me, and conversed in the kindest manner till I had recovered from my embarrassment, and then requested me to join the dance. I was afraid I should be very awkward, as our little knowledge of dancing, you know, was taught by the poor lame French soldier whom my father sheltered so long by the

kitchen fire. I soon, however, forgot every thing else in the delight of the dance. I danced the whole evening, and though I was never at a ball, as you know, before, I was insensible of any fatigue. We did not get home till two o'clock, — what will my father say to that ?

‘Oh, dearest, I have been to the theatre, or rather to the moral lecture, as they have named it here. You know when we have been reading Shakspeare, how we have longed to see one of his plays performed. This was not Shakspeare, but a very amusing play, called the “School for Scandal.” The next day I dined at Mrs. K——’s, at dinner I sat next to a beautiful young lady dressed extremely in the fashion. We were speaking of the theatre, and I told her how much I had been disappointed not to see one of Shakspeare’s tragedies. “Shakspeare,” said she, “I have never heard of him.” I told her how many of our long winter evenings had been cheered by his magic. “Well,” said she, “I will take some afternoon when I am at leisure and read him.” I could hardly help smiling, — Shakspeare read in an afternoon !

‘I fear I shall be obliged to spend the two dollars my father gave me, to purchase shoes, — our village shoemaker is so far behind the

fashion. I intended to return them to him untouched, well knowing how ill he can spare so large a sum.

' I was sorry to leave all C——'s shirts for you to finish. If T—— will put aside her drawing and her flowers for a few days, she can help you with them.

' I forgot to tell you that the tea in the green canister is to be kept for Mr. H——, when he drinks tea with us. He likes no other, and I always make that for him alone. Mrs. —— is very kind, and I have much to entertain me here; but I long to be at home again, with my work and book, in the quiet of our little parlor, and the children around me. Kiss them all, and my dear father also.

' P. S. Pray remember to make C—— and B—— dry their feet at night. The weather is now so wet, I am afraid they will get sick, and I not at home to nurse them. Hannah must be careful and prudent. Give my love to the faithful creature. I shall bring her home a fan or a snuff-box.'

During this visit, my sister formed that connection which was afterwards so happily cemented by her marriage. She came home, but

only to leave us soon after forever. This was a dreadful loss to me. Hitherto we had shared one object, one room, one wardrobe, one heart. Another's interests were now hers ; 'her place was by another's side,' and I was widowed. I could not repine, for she was happy, but the charm of existence had gone. I had lost my second self, my second conscience. I had leaned on her ; I must now support others. The staff had left my side ; I must descend the path of life alone. It is not the gay, the loquacious, the talented, whose loss is most deplored in the domestic circle. The loving, the disinterested, the self-sacrificing, are those who come back to us in all the quiet hours of life, and who are loved and mourned in the deepest recesses of our hearts. They are like the gentle dews of a summer evening. They melt into the heart, and keep fresh and green all those unostentatious charms that make the daily beauty of domestic life. Perhaps they are never heard of beyond the circle of home ; but there, the deep fountain of their love and devotion keeps alive the blessings that Providence has dispensed to the humblest fireside in our happy country.

## LETTER XIII.

‘Das Herz ist gestorben, die Welt ist leer.’  
SCHILLER.

‘My God! I thank thee! may no thought  
E'er deem thy chastisement severe;  
But may this heart, by sorrow taught,  
Calm each vain wish, each idle fear.’

NORTON.

THE next severe affliction that came upon us after the marriage of my sister, was the illness of the fairest, the flower and favorite of our little circle. She was five or six years younger than myself, and I had been to her a sort of mother sister, while she had repaid me with the love of a sister, and the confiding tenderness of a child. As half a century has passed since she was laid in the all-forgetting grave, perhaps you will pardon me for dwelling a little on her memory.

In loveliness of person she surpassed all whom I can now remember. Small, but exquisitely formed, even faultless features were shaded by hair of raven blackness. Large hazel eyes were

softened by the most tender expression of sensibility and truth. She had, from infancy, a dove-like temper, united with the most winning vivacity and playfulness. This is, I think, a rare union ; for the temperament susceptible of great excitement and vivacity is often attended with an irritable temper.

Considering her youth, for she died at seventeen, the love of the beautiful was remarkably developed in her mind. Without instruction, she had become a tolerable proficient in drawing, — and had learnt to color her pictures from imitating the colors of nature. By her own unassisted efforts, she had made a flower-garden, where she cultivated all the rare flowers she could procure ; and every morning in summer, not only was there a fresh vase on the mantelpiece, but a fresh bouquet by the side of every cup at breakfast. At that early age she could not have read *Ophelia*, but the flowers were always selected with reference to the character of the person for whom they were chosen. To my father, with rare delicacy, she always gave a bunch of fragrant shrubs, thinking, no doubt, that gay flowers were not suited to gray hairs.

· About the age of fifteen, without any apparent cause, her gay spirits became overclouded with

a shade of melancholy. All her mirth forsook her. She had till this time sung as the birds sing, because she could not help it. She had been happy and gay like the young lambs ; like the beautiful flowers, her *protégées*, rejoicing in sunshine and in showers.

‘ Glad hearts, without reproach or blot,  
Who do God’s work, and know it not.’

We sought in vain for the cause of this change. Perhaps her health began *then* imperceptibly to fail. Perhaps living so much in solitude, her imagination had received a premature development, and the food which our narrow circle afforded her had become exhausted. Susceptible minds should not at this early age indulge in reverie and solitary musings. Mothers, who think of almost every thing, should think also of this. A young girl, who is left without congenial society before those deep affections which constitute the happiness of every woman have taken possession of the heart, is prone to indulge the imagination in vague dreams of a happiness never to be realized in this ‘ working-day world.’ They are too often, like the gossamer, woven in solitude and darkness, but brightened by the morning sun, which fades as his beams decline, or is broken and

vanishes with a breath. Healthy occupation, out-of-door exercise, or the most homely amusements, should take the place, in sensitive characters, of solitary reverie.

I remember the first intimation I had of her approaching debility. We were walking under the trees of our orchard of a summer's evening, and she was repeating poetry, of which her mind was full, while I could never remember a line. The walk was short, but every time we turned her voice failed, and she leaned against a tree for support. A pang like that caused by the point of an arrow went through my heart. We returned to the house, — a concealed, but heavy sorrow, had settled down on my mind.

From that hour I was sensible that she gradually failed, and in less than a year, she was laid on the bed from which she never rose. I nursed her day and night through that long illness. At length the film of death gathered over the beautiful eye ; the brow and cheek became ashy pale, and thin blue lips, that once had been the rosy and dimpled abode of love, would hardly meet upon the pearly teeth. Death approached with timid, almost imperceptible steps. He seemed reluctant to lay his icy hand on one so lovely ; but at last the gentle eye was closed,

the loving heart was still. No other eye could ever turn to me with such confiding love, no other heart would ever beat with the indulgent tenderness of hers.

How mysterious was Death ! What a celestial calm had settled down upon that beautiful form, till then alive to every gentle emotion ! What a holy tranquillity ! It seemed too sacred to be broken by the sighs of my bursting heart, to be disturbed by the agony of my regret.

She left me in the beginning of April. The snow-drops, those lingerers on the skirts of winter, the violets, the earliest messengers of spring, were all alive in her little garden ; the first, with its chaste, white blossoms, the other, with its sweet perfume, had come forth to meet her ; the one an emblem of her purity, the other of her true humility. The robin was there to cheer, with his early song, her who had fed and sheltered him. But, alas ! the spirit was not there. The lovely temple that had enshrined it was cold and lifeless.

‘ What wakest thou in the heart, O Spring ?  
Vain longings for the dead ! ’

Where are ye, oh beloved ? There is no voice from the cold, unanswering grave ! The

blue, ethereal sky responds not to our prayer ! We must be satisfied that Jesus has said, 'I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live !'

Death, at that time my inexorable enemy, has since become familiar as a domestic friend. He waits to unite the last of a household with the younger and better, who have gone before. As I look back on seventy years, crowned at once by length of days and distinguished blessings, the resting-places seem all marked with tears, and remind me of that touching circumstance, that when the tombs were opened at Pompeii, the wreaths of flowers were turned to ashes, while the vials containing the tears of relatives were unchanged and perfect. We cannot expect to escape the penalty annexed to length of days. Children and grandchildren have left me ; the familiar friend has fallen from my side in the down-hill path of life. Strange faces meet me, strange footsteps pass me, and I feel that I am alone in a world that belongs to a younger generation.

But I must ask your indulgence ; I fear I have exceeded the limits of the last century, as well as the utmost extent of your patience. I fear,

my dear friend, in recording the scenes of my youth, my letters have been too deeply tinged with the coloring of egotism. In recalling the shades of long-buried friends, I could scarcely avoid mingling myself, also a *shadow*, with them. This, I trust, you will pardon, together with all the other faults of a garrulous *old woman*.











